



IGN.COM unplugged

COMPLETELY FREE*
with IGN Insider

in-depth look at
Grand Theft Auto
Vice City

brand-new design
each issue packed with
100% fresh IGN features

quake-con
DOOM III on the way

plus

- gba's back to basics
- matt's rare editorial
- dvd holiday preview
- and much more...

OCT 2002 - IGNINSIDER



0 IGN.COM 0



08 | GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY ::

IGN takes a sweeping, insightful look at Rockstar's inevitably successful action-adventure romp. – **Douglass C. Perry**

16 | QUAKE-CON: FOR GAMERS, BY GAMERS ::

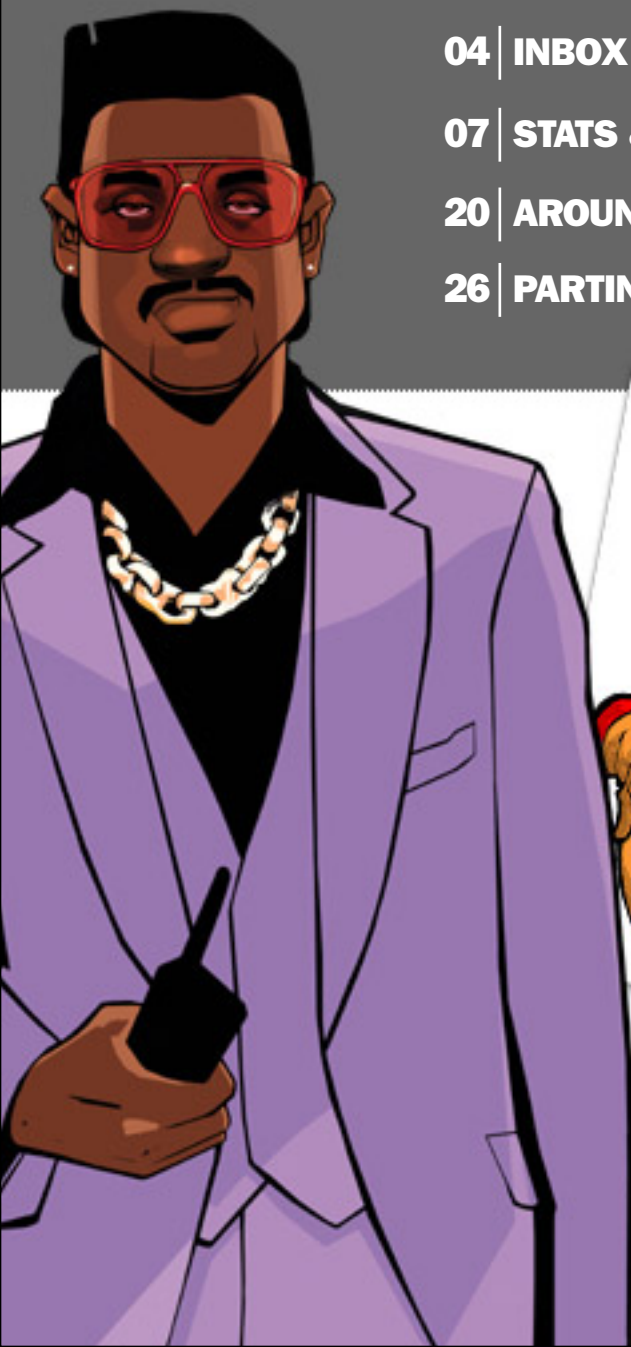
Every year, a little town in Texas becomes home to thousands of gamers for four brilliant days of gaming. – **Dan Adams**

04 | INBOX [mail]

07 | STATS & RUMORS

20 | AROUND THE OFFICE

26 | PARTING SHOT



54 | FAN ART ::

Check out the all-new Fan Art section!

Letter From The Editor ::

On behalf of the editors, the design team, and entire IGN gang, I'd like to be the first to welcome everyone to the brand-new design of your favorite IGN Unplugged monthly magazine. We know you love Unplugged, but we wanted to give you a million more reasons to love it. So with that in mind, we've taken a long, hard look at what you want as both a reader and gamer, and came back with this. We really hope you like it.

So what's waiting for you inside? First off – we scrapped our old, crappy previews altogether and replaced them with brand-new, kickass features. Features like Aaron Boulding's insightful "Aliens vs. Predator" piece and Matt Casamassina's editorial entitled "Rare's Gone. Now What?" You'll also get all of the same mailbags and office abuse that you've grown to love, in addition to even more cool sections packed with classic IGN humor, pics, and stinky socks. If it weren't for the stinky socks, we think this issue would be our very best yet.

Many thanks must go out to all editors for their tireless efforts, in particular to one Douglass C. Perry for saving the day with his awesome GTA: Vice City cover feature. We'd also like to give a huge thanks to Scott Allen and the entire IGN Design Team, who spent countless sleepless nights putting this awesome new design together. Nice job, guys!

Now please enjoy this great Unplugged rebirth, and we'll catch you back here next month with even more killer content to help stuff your stockings.

Cory D. Lewis
– **Cory D. Lewis**



21 GameCube

Rare's Gone. Now What?

Matt Casamassina editorializes about what he'd do in Nintendo's place.

25 Xbox

Predator Vs. Aliens

Two movies, not a new PC title, that contributed to videogames. But which film gave more?

29 PlayStation 2

Revenge of the Platformers 2002

IGNPS2 uncovers one of this Hoiday season's biggest commodities: the return of the platform genre.

35 PC

Combat Mission: Barbarossa to Berlin Preview

Battlefront.com moves beyond *Beyond Overlord* with one of the most amazing Eastern Front games to date.

40 Game Boy Advance

Back to Basics

Old-school arcade gamers have a lot to enjoy on the Game Boy Advance.

45 DVD

Holiday DVD Preview

Three months packed full of awesome DVDs are on the way.

50 Gear

iRiver iDP-100 Review

We take a look at the first DataPlay portable in the world.

IGN.COM
unplugged

Peer Schneider - Network Director

Steven Horn - Editorial Director

Talmadge Blevins - Editorial Manager

Scott Allen - Director of Design

Wendy Mazzoni - Senior Producer

IGN Insider

Jason Bates - Editor in Chief

IGN PC

Stephen Butts - Editor in Chief

Dan Adams - On Vacation

Ivan Sulic - Associate Editor

IGN GameCube / N64

Matt Casamassina - Editor in Chief

Fran Mirabella III - Editor

IGN PS2 / PSX

Doug Perry - Editor in Chief

David Smith - Editor

Jeremy Dunham - Editor

IGN Pocket

Craig Harris - Just One Guy in Chief

IGN Xbox

Aaron Boulding - Editor

Hilary Goldstein - Contributing Editor

IGN Guides

Chris Carle - Editor in Chief

IGN Gear

Michael Wiley - Editor in Chief

IGN DVD

Jeremy Conrad - Editor

IGN Filmforce

Brian Zoromski - Editor in Chief

Brian Linder - Editor

IGN Design Team

Marty Smith - Art Director

Dave Vioria - Sr. Visual Designer

Ryan Jennings - Sr. Production Designer

Scott Senkowski - Visual Designer

IGN Unplugged

Cory Lewis - Editor



The Fine Print:

All contents © 2002 IGN.com. All rights reserved. IGN Unplugged is published by IGN Entertainment, Inc (NASDAQ: IGNX), 3240 Bayshore Blvd, Brisbane, CA 94005, USA. Reproduction in whole or part is prohibited. Please do not distribute. IGN.com is not affiliated with the companies or products covered in IGN Unplugged. Unplugged is only available to IGN subscribers. If you ripped up off and would like to sleep better at night, go to <http://insider.ign.com> to subscribe. The editorial content for this issue was due on August 12th. The last of the content was actually turned in August 29th. Do you think they'll hit the next Unplugged editorial deadline?



inbox ::

Every month, we receive thousands of emails asking about everything from, "What is Tal's mom like in bed," to, "When is Doom IV coming out?" While we can't print them all, we've chosen some of our favorites to show you here along with our highly entertaining responses. Enjoy!

email of the month ::

Tal is correct, 6.9 is our average game score. But this mathematical average doesn't mean that it's necessarily the yardstick by which all "average games" are judged. It just means that the gaming industry is performing "above average" by our 10-point scale, on average. Averagely speaking.

– **IGN's own Cory Lewis**

DVD ::

Episode II VHS

Quick question: I watched the Episode II DVD trailer, and they mentioned that the VHS has some special content as well (including the deleted scenes). More importantly, it mentioned a video featurette that goes through all of the Star Wars movies ever made. My question: is this featurette on the DVD as well? Does the VHS version have any unique content?

– **Todd**

Jeremy responds: *The Star Wars Connections featurette is an exclusive to the VHS release of Episode II. It would have been cool for them to include it on the DVD, but they had to put something on the VHS edition to make it sell.*

Magnum PI

I was reading that Magnum P.I. is going to be released on DVD in a collector series. Any idea when?

– **Sean**

Jeremy responds: *Universal recently announced DVD release of Magnum PI, Quantum Leap, and Beretta (among others), but no release dates were announced for anything except Law and Order. Expect them sometime next year.*

XBOX ::

Rare Attitude

The ex-team members that made GoldenEye are gone from Rare, so

who cares if they won't be making exclusive games for Nintendo. Let's face it, Rare only makes cookie-cutter platformers anymore that are void of any real genius. And people pick up on this, that's why their platformer games have never caught on since Donkey Kong Country. Donkey Kong Country was a great game, but they could never and have never followed it with another great platformer. That's why Rare sold out to Microsoft – they are just trying to keep afloat. They know what they are, that's why they went with Bill Gate's Microsoft, they share the same personality (they both borrow from other people's ideas).

– **THReeNtMD8**

Aaron responds: *I didn't detect a question in there anywhere so I'll just respond by saying I disagree. Rare, as a company, has a proven track record of high quality games. Some have been wildly popular, some have been duds, but you always got a solid game engine with good control. Compare that with the lineup of sloppy game companies out there releasing stuff for the Xbox and I'd definitely put Rare in the top third, at the very least, of game creators out there. Oh, and your Nintendo undies are showing.*

Missed Connections

I was reading the Xbox Live FAQ on your site and I was wondering: what if you don't own a computer? Will you still be able to use Xbox Live? I thought that you just run the phone

line/cable from the Xbox to the wall and Xbox Live would be your Internet server can you please answer me back.

– **Elias**

Aaron responds: *Xbox Live doesn't run through a computer, so don't worry about dropping the cash for a new one. You do run a big category 5 cable from your high speed internet access port in your wall, or out of whatever piece of hardware your service provider gives you and into the back of the Xbox. Fire up the Xbox Live start disk, have all your registration information ready, and you're good to go.*

GBA ::

Bulking up the e-Reader cards

Now that the e-Reader device is out, is it possible that Nintendo can put larger games on one card?

– **Sammy**

Craig responds: *I think the technology in the e-Reader is pretty set. The standard is 2.2K on the long side, and 1.1K on the short side. I don't think that Nintendo can just magically make the e-Reader know how to read and understand more than that if it ever decides to upgrade the Dot Code technology established for this device.*

Damn it, Mario 3: When?

When do you think we will see Super Mario Bros. 3 on the Game Boy Advance? Nintendo went right over ▶

that one when it was doing all the Super Mario Advance games, and it's the best Mario ever!

– Unknown

Craig responds: *It's not like it's a conspiracy. Nintendo didn't purposely jump over porting that game just to annoy fans of the series. Nothing said that they had to go in order, anyway. Super Mario World is, in my opinion better than Super Mario 3, and Yoshi's Island is even better than those too. But I'm sure that the company is porting the game over to the portable, and you'll most likely see it on shelves by the Spring of next year, at the earliest.*

GCN ::

Burnout 2 for GameCube

Hey! I just watched the trailer for Burnout 2 and it looks so frickin' amazing! I was gonna buy the original, but I'm holding off 'til the new version.

You guys are in pretty tight with the Criterion crew, right? What's the word on the GameCube release date?

– Powell

Fran responds: *While nothing is official yet, I'm pretty sure Criterion begins work on porting Burnout 2: Point of Impact to GameCube in October. It will be finished up around February 2003. Yea, it sucks that we have to wait, but the programming tricks the team pulls off should be worth it, with any luck.*

PS2 ::

Cool Parties!

What cool first-party PlayStation 2 games are coming out in 2003?

– Craigneeder321

Doug responds: *Well, strangely, we have heard that The Getaway is being pushed until January 2003, but even if that rumor proves to be false and it comes out in 2002, then there is always Primal, War of the Monsters, and surely another Gran Turismo game (maybe GT4?). Oh yeah, and the recently announced Rise to Honor, too. Also, I wouldn't be surprised to hear about another*

Naughty Dog game being announced soon.

Coed Naked Jedi Volleyball

I was curious if ya'll knew why we won't be seeing Dead or Alive Volleyball on the PS2. Did Microsoft buy the rights? If not, then will we see another DOA fighter made for PS2? Also, what about a remake for StarWars: Master of Terkas...ur...or whatever it was. Has LucasArts thought about that? Thanks for the feedback!

– AitrusSG

Doug responds: *Tecmo still likes Sony (publicly, anyway), but that company is totally development driven, and since the developers there REALLY like the Xbox's power and ease of use, they have made great friends with Microsoft, which has worked out well for Microsoft, too. We might see that game sometime after its release on Xbox, but it's a difficult one to predict, seeing as how Dead or Alive 3 went straight to Xbox exclusively. I'd bet on it staying purely on Xbox.*

StarWars: Master of Terkas? Do you mean Star Wars: Master Teras Kasi? (Or more aptly named: Star Wars: Master of Turkey Pie.) That rumor did float through here once before, but it died quickly. That game was crappy, my friend, and the only reason it should be remembered is as an example of what to never to do again.

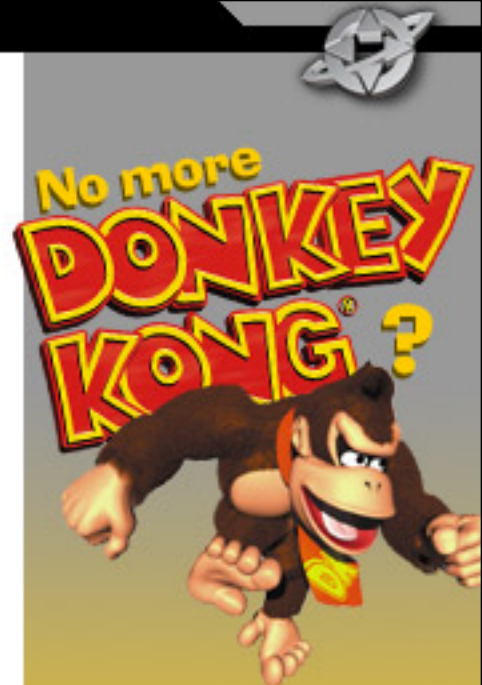
PC ::

Space-Sim Preplan

In regards to X2: The Khaak Threat, I can't seem to find a release date or any update on its progress or lack thereof. I found one article at your site, but alas, I am not an Insider because of the fact that I am a cheap bastard. So I was wondering if you could give me an estimate of a month or even a year that I might find this game at a nearby store. Thanks and keep up the good work.

– Chad

Ivan responds: *Sure, I can give you a general estimate. We're expecting ▶*



GAMECUBE ::

So, I guess this means Rare's departure to Microsoft means it is not making anymore Donkey Kong games, right?...*pouts* Well I think Rareware would be better off with Nintendo. Anyways, I have a simple question. Will Nintendo make anymore D.K. games or will they just kick Donkey Kong in the dumpster? – Serpent

Fran responds: *Of course Nintendo will still continue the Donkey Kong franchise. You have to remember, the company handed it off to Rare – not the other way around. It's a pretty valuable property, so Nintendo will probably find someone else who wants to do it. The bigger question is: who?*



ADAM SANDLER'S



Eight
CRAZY
Nights

FilmForce ::

Hey, I heard about an animated movie that Adam Sandler has coming out. That would be off the hook. I think Adam is the funniest person on Earth. What's the deal?

– Tollbooth Willy

Linder responds: Well, Willy, the flick you're referring to is Adam Sandler's *Eight Crazy Nights*. The uniquely stylized animated flick has all the makings of Sandler comic genius: youth basketball, old girlfriends, the holiday spirits, and the mall. It's based on the "Whitey" skit on Sandler's "Stan and Judy's Kid" album.

Eight Crazy Nights is the first animated feature from Sandler's Happy Madison production company. He even started a whole studio with artists and everything, called Meatball Animation. Adam provides the voices for the 3 lead characters in the film! It's due to hit theaters around Thanksgiving.



the *Privateer/Elite* influenced *X_ - The Threat* (notice the name change for US territories) to arrive "after summer." Since Egosoft is still in publishing negotiations, that's about as close as I can get without throwing out wild speculation.

Unfortunately for you, you are not an Insider, so you'll never read this and thus will never know. Ha! How'd you like that? Wait, you can neither like nor dislike it. You don't even know we're making fun of you!

X_ does look pretty killer. For we, the few and proud space-sim enthused, it should be a real treat. Next-generation graphics, classic *Elite* gameplay, a huge, dynamic universe... Oh yeah.

Updating a Relic

Before my letter I would just like to say great site and I am typing this from my computer networking class – binary math sucks...ahem.

Any news on *Homeworld 2*? I saw some screens in a mag that shall remain nameless, but I demand that IGN stalk Relic until they give us more – or a demo. Thanks.

– Justin

Ivan responds: Yes there is a *Homeworld 2*. Yes, it is being developed by Relic. No, we are not stalking them (we keep our obsessive nature limited to television hotties like Charisma Carpenter). No, we are not getting anything. As sad as it may be, we still occasionally get passed up for print magazines by PR when it comes to dishing out coverage, even though we're far, far larger in every single way. Such is the ignorant state of the industry. They are on paper, therefore they must be better.

To answer your question: No, I do not have a specific release date to give you, nor can I comment on a demo. And yes, it is alright for you to read PC Gamer (so long as you do it in the store and not pay for it).

FilmForce ::

Sea Evil

I saw the poster for *Ghost Ship* at the movies last night. It's creepy as hell.

I know it's the same people that did *Thirteen Ghosts* right? What else do you know about it?

– Rob B.

Linder responds: *Ghost Ship* is the third film from Dark Castle Entertainment, the production company behind *Thirteen Ghosts* and *The House on Haunted Hill*. *Thirteen Ghosts* director Steve Beck directs the flick. ER's Julianna Margulies and Gabriel Byrne star as members of a salvage crew that discovers the remains of a grand passenger liner in a remote part of the Bering Sea. Once aboard the liner, thought lost for over 40 years, the crew discovers the ship's horrific past and must fight for their lives.

In the Office ::

Burnout...not just a game?

Has an intern ever pulled an all-nighter before? Things Mr. Hwang accomplished before passing out at 7am this morning:

- 2/3 of Blinx guide
- helped Ivan take screens for his Unreal guide
- helped copyedit a ton of reviews for the Buyer's Guide

A new IGN intern record?

– Cory Lewis

Hilary responds: Thank you for burning out my intern in record time – only two weeks and he's working like he gets paid here.

Want your voice to be heard? Tell us your thoughts about Unplugged at unplugged@ign.com. ■

You can email the editors at:

cube_mail@ign.com

xbox_mail@ign.com

filmforce@ign.com

dvd_mail@ign.com

ps2_mail@ign.com

pc_mail@ign.com

pocket_mail@ign.com

gear_mail@ign.com

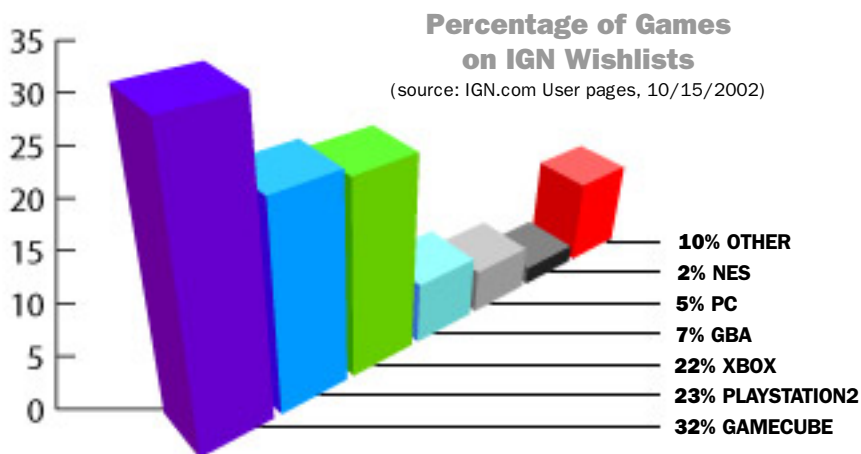


stats & rumors ::

The gaming industry is always flooded with information – facts, rumors, stats, and the occasional Fran joke. Here at IGN, our innocent ears fall upon these juicy tidbits quite often, and such tasty morsels of knowledge were meant to be shared with the readers we love. Below you'll find the latest stats and rumors to pass through our offices – some more amusing than others.

SHOW ME THE GAMES! (stat)

We recently launched our IGN user Pages (<http://users.ign.com>) with great response, as thousands of readers listed their gaming collections and most wanted upcoming titles. So looking to the future, which systems are we all hotly anticipating? To the left is a look at exactly which platforms have the most games on users' "Wishlists."



NINTENDO'S GBA 2! (rumor)

Maybe you've heard this one too. Recently, a whisper has begun to spread around the online gaming community of a second Game Boy Advance system hitting the overseas market in the very near future. Well, we've checked with our sources, and a few of our overseas spies have also heard the same rumblings of a GBA 2. Shhh! In fact, one secret agent even confirmed a few of the more juicy rumors in the mix – namely, a new backlit screen (finally!) attached to a protective flip-top display. Is a redesigned GBA really on the way from Nintendo? We'll keep those spies digging and report back with more tidbits just as soon as they sneak in.

USER PAGES STATISTICS! (stat) -- <http://users.ign.com>

Most Wanted Games

1. Metroid Prime (GCN)
2. Legend of Zelda GameCube (GCN)
3. Grand Theft Auto: Vice City (PS2)
4. Halo 2 (Xbox)
5. Splinter Cell (Xbox)
6. Star Fox Adventures (GCN)
7. Resident Evil 0 (GCN)
8. Super Mario Sunshine (GCN)
9. Metroid Fusion (GBA)
10. TimeSplitters 2 (GCN)

Most Owned Games

1. Super Smash Bros. Melee (GCN)
2. Super Mario Sunshine (GCN)
3. LoZ: Ocarina of Time (N64)
4. Grand Theft Auto III (PS2)
5. SW Rogue Squadron II (GCN)
6. Final Fantasy X (PS2)
7. Halo (Xbox)
8. Resident Evil (GCN)
9. Gran Turismo 3 A-spec (PS2)
10. Super Mario 64 (N64)

FRAN THE NINNY (rumor)

Inside sources here at IGN have heard of peculiar late-night practices of a certain GameCube editor, Mr. Fran Mirabella III. Apparently the poor guy has some difficulty sleeping at night and as a result must perform a number of comical routines to obtain his much-needed beauty rest: running a high-powered electric fan for "background noise," wearing earplugs to then cancel out said background noise, wearing a woman's eye mask to block out all ambient traces of moonlight, and even go so far as to place a second pillow directly on top of his face – to prevent the spiders from making a home inside his nostrils. IGN was unable to verify the validity of this rumor, as Fran also locks his bedroom door when he sleeps.

THE COMPOSITION OF FRAN'S DESK

2% not garbage

98% garbage



(stat)



IGN takes a sweeping, insightful look at Rockstar's inevitably successful action-adventure romp.

grand theft auto vice city



This game is not a sequel, it's not an add-on pack, and it's not an extra set of GTA3 levels. It's an entirely new game based in the world of Grand Theft Auto.

— Terry Donovan
COO, Rockstar Games

Believe it or not, between 1998 and 2000, not much attention was paid to the Grand Theft Auto series. The initial PC game introduced in 1997 definitely turned people's heads and produced steady sales, but the London 1969 Edition and GTA 2 titles landed in cold, uninterested hands. Now that Rockstar Games has finally, finally caught everyone's attention with its Grand Theft Auto series (and boy has it), Rockstar is at the helm of a new empire. Mature, non-linear, action-adventure games are going to be coming a dime a dozen in the next few years, so brace yourself – games of this nature are harder to execute than you'd think.

But Grand Theft Auto: Vice City should capture everyone's interest. According to COO Terry Donovan, this game is not a sequel, it's not an add-on pack, and it's not an extra set of GTA3 levels. It's an entirely new game based in the world of Grand Theft Auto. Though in a way, it is a prequel of sorts. Set 15 years before GTA3, this game enables players to take on the role of a different character, Tommy Vercetti, who, with a little help from actor Ray Liotta, can now speak. Players can do things they could only dream of last year: ride motorcycles, scooters, more boats and cars than before, and from high above the city of vice, they can sit behind the controls of a helicopter.

The game's abundant abilities have multiplied. Much of the game's action takes place inside buildings, such as hotels, dance halls, apartments, laundromats and possibly even airports. There are more weapons, including a very high-functioning chainsaw, a better aiming system, more complex missions, and Vice City itself looks entirely different than the dark, cold, and cruel Liberty City. It's a neon radiant beach town, steeped in the opposites of evil and good. As with Grand Theft Auto III, Grand Theft Auto: Vice City gives you the ability to be whichever way you'd like and the guns to back it up. There are no moral overtones, no judgments made, and no punishment for taking sides, but however you play the game, you have to be good.

When we sat down with the Rockstar crew in New York on a late summer afternoon in August, the room was quiet but terse. Donovan delivered the set up for Grand Theft Auto: Vice City, which will enter a videogame world now wild in anticipation of its release – so wild that retail stores anticipate more than 4 million orders. "We're not just resting on our laurels," Donovan explained. "We realize that we could easily just reproduce more levels of the same game, but that's not what's going to happen. Grand Theft Auto: Vice City is going to be bigger, bolder, and faster than GTA3." Donovan also clarified that, "without the violence and humor, the wit and cynicism" that was so central to the heart of GTA: Vice City, "a game of this kind could be a real disaster." With that, the TV clicked on, and I witnessed the company's newest creation.

THE GLITTERING CITY OF VICE

The first, most concrete improvements in Grand Theft Auto: Vice City are visual. While the time (the 1980s) and the location (a virtual Miami, Florida) dictate much of the game's style and fashion (such as neon exteriors, big hair, and print shirts), Rockstar North's (formerly known as DMA Design) title has undergone a noticeable difference in texture resolution and sharpness of detail. The characters and vehicles look much better. Tommy Vercetti shows off nearly twice the amount details on his simple outfit alone. The creases and added color in his pants, the smoother joints in his body, and the lines on his face all point to a richer, more sophisticated looking lead character. Out are the angular segmented joints of the past, and in are fully texture-skinned models. In fact, Tommy will change outfits a few times during the game.

"Our artists have done a terrific job creating Vice City," exclaimed Rockstar's Creative team member James Worrell. "We visited every neighborhood in Miami, which is obviously the inspirational source, and they've managed to make the game feel just right. Couple this with some clever atmospheric effects (the sea at sunset is stunning) and the result is an environment that feels hot. When it rains, the streets reflect the neon lights, palm fronds blow about the streets, and if you wander out onto the beach when the wind picks up, sand gets blown around.

grand theft auto Vice City

“Our artists have done a terrific job creating Vice City. We visited every neighborhood in Miami...and they've managed to make the game feel just right.”

— James Worrell
Creative team member

Whilst playing the game, I often find myself involuntarily squinting against the sun's glare on a sunny day or hunching up on a quiet rainy night.”

The vehicles are immediately eye-catching. The white stretch limousines, the old American sedans, the boats, the helicopters, and most notably, the motorcycle choppers all look polished, highly detailed, and sharper in look. The vehicles are forged with heavier perimeter lines and more distinctly drawn, with darker outlines helping to define each shape. The higher resolution assists in making the textures look sharper, too. Different lighting effects are used to create a bright, more radiant look for Vice City.

Before, you could see the sun ascend and descend, and the streets would grow dark and dangerous. Now, you'll watch the same natural progression from day to night, but filtering into both is the effect known as radiosity, which casts a shiny gleam upon objects, adding depth to characters and moving vehicles and creating that surreal fluorescent glow associated with the '80s. Many of the civilians in Vice City also boast excellent graphic improvements. They can be seen roller-skating down the sidewalk, reading newspapers on park benches, smoking cigarettes, and actually flirting with one another.

THE LIVING, BREATHING VICE CITY

Being a South Eastern city that emulates Miami's varying aspects, GTA: Vice City is a beach town bristling with sunny beach spots to eat and drink at, penthouse apartments with lovely patios, pools to swim in, and beaches to lay on. Naturally, most of it should take place outside in the bright coastal sunshine. For the first time in the series, however, Rockstar North is taking the game indoors. Parking the chopper for the moment, players can walk inside buildings, houses, hotel lobbies, discos, and offices. Gameplay scenarios with full-on shootouts and fighting scenes take place inside buildings, as do numerous cut-scenes. In fact, game missions involve more complicated objectives, combining entering buildings, sniping, shooting-out tires, busting up gangs, and driving like a maniac. So when it comes to measuring the size of GTA: Vice City, the task is a little more interesting than in previous games.

Going inside buildings, players discover an unusual amount of AI activity going on, too. In last year's feat, Rockstar North worked on, among other things, creating a large city inhabited by an assorted quantity of AI characters, each functioning in unique ways. Now, they not only function outside on the street, but also exist in different ways inside the various buildings.

"Many of the interiors play an important role in the story," explains Assistant Producer Jeremy Pope. "Others are directly integrated into the mission structure. All the interiors have a purpose, a reason to go inside them, and an interactive and important role within the game in their own way. There is actually a diverse assortment of interiors for the player to explore, ranging from small stores, to huge interiors like airport terminals.

For example, hardware stores, laundromats, police stations, and bars are just a few of the many indoor areas that you can visit."



grand theft auto vice city

Vercetti is no street chump, he's a gangster...

Occurring both inside and outside of structures, Rockstar North's game has been able to squeeze out more than twice the amount of polygons than in GTA3. And that's no small feat, considering the size of last year's monster hit. The ability to go inside also provides the use of internal structures, such as windows and staircases, which players can then explore, and in which they can discover the game's newer secrets. After all, buildings provide rooftops, too, which can be used for various things, namely using sniper rifles, landing helicopters, or perhaps even jumping to and fro.

"Vice City is significantly bigger than Liberty City," said Houser. "Obviously, more city means more things within that city for you to mess about with – more buildings to go into, more roofs, more jumps, more surprises, more waterways, and more variety in locations. It also gave us the opportunity to make some long, straight roads that you can really drive fast down. Given some of the new vehicles – boats and helicopters in particular – it also gives you further to travel in one of them, making them more fun and more useful. Obviously, a large part of the experience of any Grand Theft Auto game is learning the city, so the bigger and more diverse the city, the more fun it is to interact with."

Learning about the city requires time, but so does learning the new behaviors of the denizens of Vice City. The AI in this year's game bustles with different activities than in GTA3. They hang around the beach, roller-skate, take leisure boat rides, catch the bus, hail taxis, jack cars, and apparently they know a thing or two about toilets.

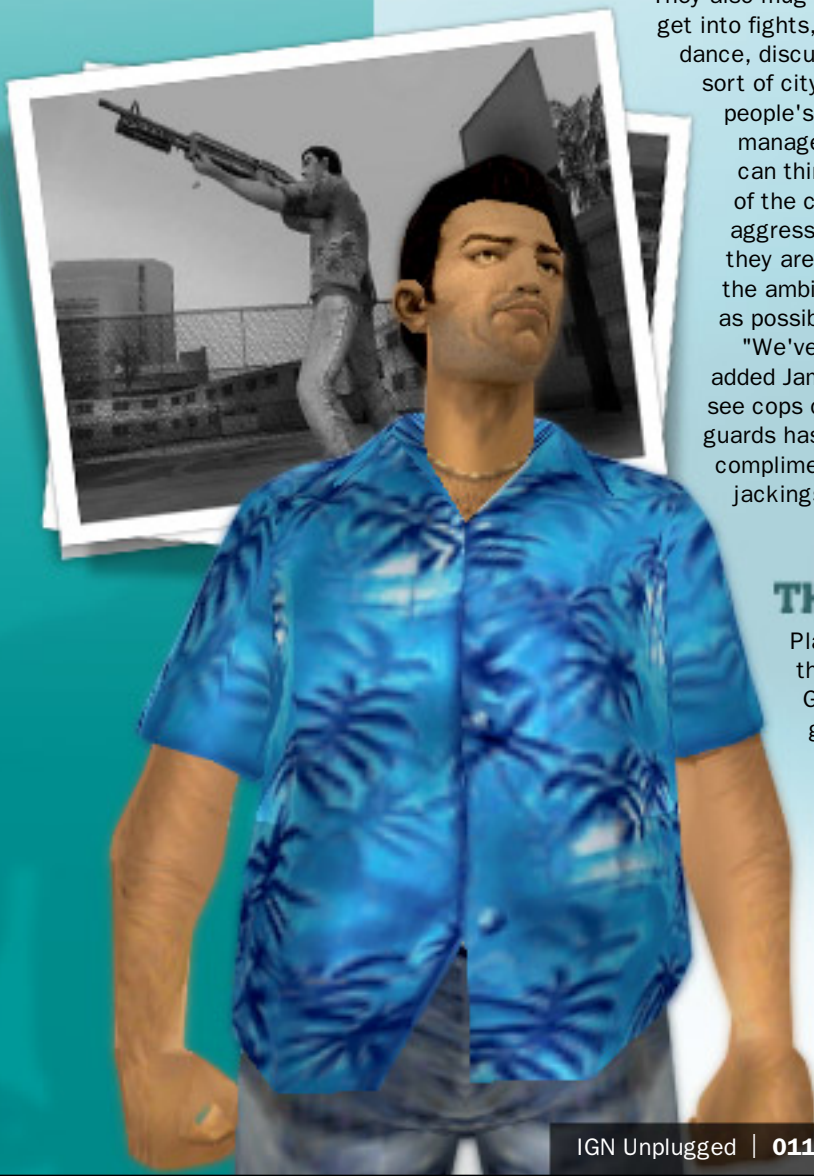
"They also mug people," said Houser. "[They] go to nightclubs, get into fights, crash cars and bikes, run businesses, shop, eat, dance, discuss politics, and abuse one another – the usual sort of city life. We have tried to add as much variety to people's behavior as possible, while still keeping the AI manageable given the number of different scenarios we can think up in a city. We're trying to combine the look of the characters with their behavior – are they aggressive or scared, busy or hanging about – with what they are saying and what their voice sounds like to make the ambient characters in the city feel as varied and alive as possible.

"We've improved the police and gang AI a great deal," added James Worrell. "Now if you hang around, you might see cops chasing a shoplifter down the street, or security guards hassling gang members in a mall. Pedestrians compliment and/or insult each other. You'll see car-jackings, people queuing at bus stops and hailing taxis."

THE TROUBLE WITH TOMMY

Playing the role of Mr. Tommy Vercetti, players find themselves in a slightly different situation than in GTA3. Vercetti is no street chump, he's a gangster who's been around the block and has no inhibitions about what it means to make the big bucks, whatever the costs. He's got history. In fact, Vercetti has just spent an excessive amount of time in jail – a maximum-security jail. Now that he's out, he wants to get back to the things he does best, working drug deals and spending money on booze, drugs, and women.

Dan Houser, VP of Creative, provided us with excellent background material: "Tommy Vercetti is a former mafia hit man, who at the start of the game is released from prison in Liberty City," Houser said. "He has been

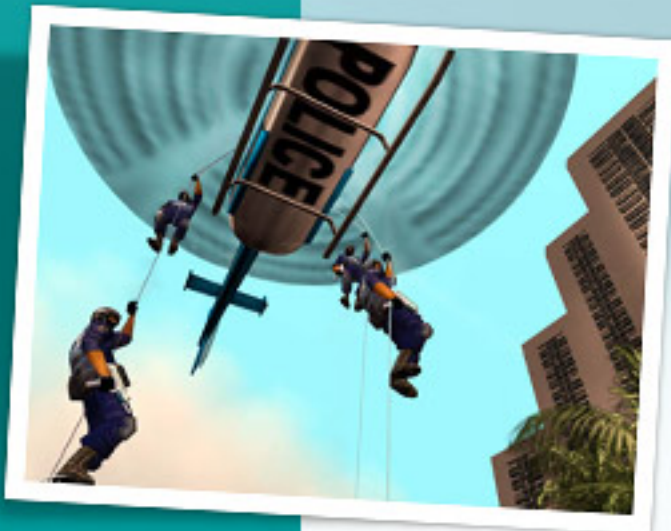


grand theft auto vice city



“...if people cross him, he will go to any lengths to get even with them.”

— Dan Houser
VP of Creative



serving time in a maximum-security jail and hasn't seen the outside world for 15 years. During his time on the inside, he never talked. He never admitted to his connections with the Forelli crime family, who from the 1960s to mid-1980s were the dominant crime family in Liberty City. Now, in his mid-30s, he's out.

"The Forelli hierarchy is nervous about him being on the street. They thought he would never be released and are unsure what to do with him. The incident for which Vercetti got put in prison was extremely gruesome, and there was talk that maybe Tommy had been set up by the Forelli's. Tommy has never voiced any dissatisfaction with the Forelli's, or questioned their integrity, but Sonny Forelli, head of the family and a childhood friend of Vercetti's, doesn't want him in Liberty City, so he arranges for Vercetti to go down to Vice City on business."

Reconnecting with his old mob boss Sonny Forelli, Vercetti is sent to Vice City to open up business operations with a deal potentially worth millions. The only thing is, Vercetti falls into a big-time set up and he loses the dough; and he's only got a vague idea who the culprit is. What's worse is that Forelli isn't pleased by the imbroglio. He wants his money back. So what's a poor bum going to do? What they always do in Grand Theft Auto, they go for the big-time, shoot for the top, rise up in a blaze of glory and bullets, and, well, try to take over the city itself. In short, the only things that stand in Vercetti's way are the biker gangs, Cuban gangs, and the corrupt politicians. That's all.

What kind of man is Vercetti? Houser explains it this way: "[He's] strong and dangerous and prepared to wait for the right opportunity to arise. He's waited 15 years, not spoken, not taken a plea bargain, and has always believed in the mafia code and in a sense of honor amongst thieves, but if people cross him, he will go to any lengths to get even with them. Knowing this, and what a confident foot soldier Vercetti is, Forelli wants to put him to work...a long way from home."

And so how does Vercetti end up on the wrong side of things so quickly? "Tommy has Mafia support in Liberty City, but in the mid 1980s, the mafia doesn't have any juice at all in Vice City," said Houser. "He goes there to set up business connections with local operations on behalf of the mafia. However, when things go very badly wrong, the mafia support turns into a Mafia threat. Tommy is accused of screwing them out of a lot of money and now has to find the money and take revenge on the people who ripped him off."

"He doesn't have any authority in Vice City, but he does have a way in: Ken Rosenberg, a corrupt and vice-ridden lawyer (they do exist) that has been vaguely helping the Liberty City crime families down in Vice City for a few years and he knows all about how criminal operations are structured down in Vice City and who does what. Using Rosenberg's connections, Vercetti ingratiates himself with the rich, powerful and corrupt denizens of Vice City. Tommy also has support from a friend throughout a large section of the game: Lance, a man who was ripped off in the same setup that has got Tommy into trouble. Together they figure out how to take the city over."



Grand Theft Auto Vice City

“Rockstar North made carjacking the videogame sport of choice in 2001.”



“GTA:VC is populated with an enormous quantity of vehicles, totaling about 120 in all.”

THIS YEAR'S MODEL

While carjacking wasn't invented by DMA back in the late 1990s, the wacky Scottish development team now known as Rockstar North did indeed make carjacking the videogame sport of choice in 2001. With Vice City, the team returns to take this illegal carnage to all new levels. Want to carjack a sports car? Bingo. Want to jack a motorcycle? Just do it. Boat? Go row it. Helicopter? Heh, yeah, swipe that thang. The point is that as GTA: Vice City has grown in girth, width, and height, your ability to do more and see more has equally increased. Now you can drive the streets, fly the skies, and pilot your ships through an extensive series of waterways and canals that become significantly important in this growing series.

Perhaps the most instantly gratifying aspects of this new game are the new vehicles you can drive, ride and pilot. More specifically, the motorcycle comes to mind. Players may be given a motorcycle or they can jack one, and at some point in the game, they'll encounter an entire motorcycle gang, replete with grizzled looks, ratty long hair, bandanas, biker chicks, and low-slung choppers. The bikes provide an all-new feel as well as an entirely different way of getting around town.

"All of the motorcycles handle differently from one another, as they all vary in shape, size, and function," said Pope. "While they all handle well, certain bikes are better suited for specific tasks. The sport bike, for example, is perfect for barreling through open highways and performing stunt jumps, while the scooter (yes, there is a scooter!) is better suited for quickly weaving through the dense streets full of cars and pedestrians."

The bikes provide a new driving and escape dynamic. You know how you're in your car on the freeway and some biker cruises in between the lanes? In GTA: Vice City, motorcycles can be used to beat traffic and to escape the law in ways previously not available in GTA3. Players can pop wheelies on bikes, too. And make no doubt about it, the cycles, which vary in size and form (including scooters and choppers), also play largely into the insane stunt jumps.

"As expected with any high-performance bike, you can attempt wheelies if you maneuver Tommy's body weight the right way," said Pope. "You can also perform certain stunt jumps that would be impossible for an automobile. I don't want to tell you too much about the stunts and tricks, as half the fun is trying things out and discovering for yourself that it can be done."

Just as in previous GTA games, you can do just about anything, and at least one new addition features the ability to pull off drive-by shootings while on two-wheel vehicles. Players can shoot sideways as in a car, or thanks to the openness of the motorcycle, they can shoot forward, too. You can shoot out car tires, too. So, for instance, players might find themselves in a mission requiring chasing an opponent, but keeping them alive. So, you pull out a sniper rifle and tag the enemy's tires as he drives away. You can puncture all four tires if you like. Likewise, plugging vehicles with bullets causes other visual deformation, too (which we will soon unearth in later features).

GTA: Vice City is populated with an enormous quantity of vehicles, totaling about 120 in all. Many vehicles from GTA3 will no doubt make their return, while new

grand theft auto vice city

ones, including various motorcycles and specialized '80s cars will make a return. Of course, Rockstar's games never use the actual licensed versions of the real world cars, but from the looks of it, various recreations of Lamborghini Countachs, Ferrari Testarossas, and DeLoreans might begin to fill out the sports car lineup, while a roster of civilian cars will make their appearance, too. Old American '50s cars, 18-wheelers, limos, and lots of muscle cars should make their way in.



GUNS, LOTS AND LOTS OF GUNS

An important note for gun-lovers and sick fans of Ammu-Nation: the weapon count has increased dramatically. The weapon set is divided into classes, with hand weapons in one, automatics in another, etc. In all, the cache of weapons totals about 30 (up 15 from last year's healthy 15), and includes all sorts of items, such as an Uzi, a Ruger, an M60, a machete, possibly a chainsaw, as well as shotguns, automatic machineguns, rocket launchers, sniper rifles, hand knives, baseball bats, and more. Rockstar isn't revealing everything all at once, but we'll soon reveal what the other 20 or so weapons include.

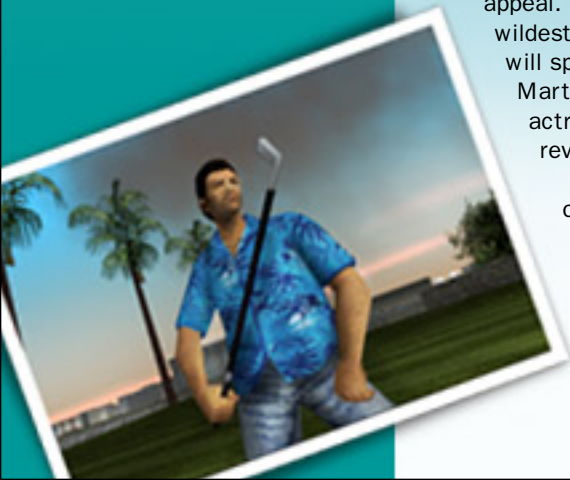
Since there are so many weapons, the classification system helps greatly, and there are some rules to the new abundance of items. Players can use more than one class of weapon at a time, but can't, for instance, use two hand weapons at once, such as a knife and a bat simultaneously. With these weapons, players can do various new things, inside and outside. For instance, Tommy can crouch and hide behind crates or furniture while being shot at. And while he reloads, the newly modified HUD can show you which level of the building he is on.

Also making the use of weapons easier is the targeting system, which has been skillfully honed and upgraded. While critics complained of a difficult system that aimed for the closest enemy, players' crosshairs will now land on the most important enemy (priority over proximity). Weapons will offer crosshairs to aim with more accuracy, and players will find that various camera angles will be used depending on the weapon selected, which will help to see the target with greater ease. And now that you can drive a motorcycle, you can also perform drive-bys on it, as well as being able to aim and target enemies in front of you.

HEARD IT ON THE RADIO

Ever since the first Grand Theft Auto, sound has played major factor in the game's appeal. In keeping with this tradition, Rockstar has upped the ante beyond our wildest imaginations. As previously mentioned, lead character Tommy Vercetti will speak, thanks to the voice acting of Ray Liotta (best known from his role in Martin Scorsese's Goodfellas). Several other well known actors and actresses (20 in all) will play a part in this game's presentation, which we'll reveal in good time.

What's more intriguing here, however, is the sheer quantity of voice-overs, which total out at 8,000 recorded voice-overs (four times GTA3's). To put that in an even better perspective, there will be more than 90 minutes of cut-scenes and more than nine hours of music, both licensed and original (i.e. radio station DJs, commercials, etc.). The much-loved radio personality Lazlow will reappear, along with a handful of other bitter, silly, and out-of-control personalities.



grand theft auto vice city

GTA:VC looks to take care of everything that wasn't quite right in the first game and to add new dimensions of play.

As with the location, the music will certainly reflect the '80s in all of its veneer, glibness, and pure pop flair. Just jump in a car and switch on the radio, and you'll hear countless hours of great music and funny radio DJs. The music ranges wildly, from rock, soul and new wave, to rap, pop, and uber-powerful anthems, to jazz and Latin. Already announced songs and artists include Blondie, Judas Priest's "You've got another thing coming," GrandMaster Flash's "The Message," Laura Branigan's "Self Control," Kool and the Gang's "Summer Madness," Flock of Seagulls' "I Ran," Hall & Oats' "Out of Touch," and Cutting Crew's "I Just Died in Your Arms." In all, there are 80 commercial tracks.

With its newfound success, Rockstar isn't intent on falling into sequel traps. And with a game as big and intricate as Grand Theft Auto 3, there is no easy way of simply adding more missions. GTA: Vice City looks to take care of everything that wasn't quite right in the first game and to add new dimensions of play, be it on a motorcycle to walking inside a hotel room with a shotgun to flying a helicopter or performing a drive-by in a speed boat. From the new targeting system to the graphics, Rockstar's newest beast of a game looks to deliver more than what gamers have asked for, and in traditional Rockstar North style, many of the subtle, inventive, and creative goodies won't be revealed until you actually play the game itself.

In the light of preparing to play the game, my strong recommendation is to re-watch two very influential pieces of '80s goodness used as source material for the game: the classic but violent Brian DePalma film Scarface (starring Al Pacino and a very young, very trim Michelle Pfeiffer), and pretty much any episode of Miami Vice, after which you'll soon be in the perfect mood to play GTA: Vice City. ■

— Douglass C. Perry





QUAKECON=

FOR GAMERS, BY GAMERS

Every year, a little town in Texas
becomes home to thousands of gamers
for four brilliant days of gaming.

Mesquite, Texas isn't really the home of anything particularly famous. Or great. Or even really anything that fun most times of the year. For the most part, when you visit what essentially is a big suburb right outside of Dallas, you'll find the typical assortment of Texas strip malls, giant cars, boot stores, and steak houses. But for four days a year, Mesquite becomes the hub for hardcore gamers in the States. In these four days, thousands of gamers will flock to the hometown of id Software, most with their own computers in tow, for the country's biggest LAN party: QuakeCon.

I didn't really know what to expect when I walked into the convention for the first time. Still tired from arriving in Dallas at two in the morning, I was a bit groggy and unaware of my surroundings, bumping into walls and accidentally feeling up women as I made my way to the center. Luckily, the shock of transition from the 90 plus degrees of hellish humidity to the ice cave inside the hotel was enough to jolt my eyes open to get a good look at the bustling crowd in the lobby. People were everywhere. More accurately, people and their computers were everywhere. Moving farther into the hotel and closer to the actual convention halls and space, my Activision guide and I suddenly ran across the registration line stretching the length of the building, making more than a few turns along the way. Every one of these people was accompanied by a PC just waiting to get plugged into the biggest LAN that I've ever seen.

But things weren't always this crazy at QuakeCon. The event started back in 1996 with just around 150 people from around the US that had decided it would be fun to get together and hook all of their computers up for a large LAN party to last the weekend. Gaming, gaming, and nothing but gaming. So they convened in Dallas, had a blast, and all promised to do it again the next year.

And it started growing. Soon enough, id was really paying attention and had decided to dip their fingers in a little bit but keep it in the hands of

the fans for the fans. At this point, id has one paid employee set to help set up the convention, with the rest of the show being run completely by volunteers. Eighteen or so core volunteers to set up and run the event and some hundred more to help with everything else at the show itself. It's easy to see how all of the extra help could be needed at this point. Since its humble beginnings, QuakeCon has grown to draw over 3,000 show attendees in 2002, 1,250 of which brought their own computers to set up in the Bring Your Own Computer (BYOC) hall.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE GAMES

Actually hearing about the BYOC and sitting inside the BYOC are two different things. At its core, it's nothing more than a gigantic room inside the Mesquite Convention Center. But in a mere 15 hours, the volunteer team of network administrators and helping hands convert the room into a giant LAN all controlled by a central, elevated hub in the middle of the room. All computers have access to the eight BYOC servers running all sorts of games. You'll see everything from *Quake* to *WarCraft III* flashing on the computer screens flooding the show floor.

But half of the time, what's so eye catching isn't what's on the computer screens as is the computer itself. The room looked like a geek's version of *The Fast and the Furious* with some of the most suped-up machines I've had the pleasure to gawk at. Richard Wong, who came from Los Angeles with his see-through, neon-lit altar to the gaming gods, says, "It just shows off your personality, you know? Lets the people here know you're ready to play. Someone willing to spend the money on a machine like this," as he pets his tower lovingly, "has got to love his games and has probably got the skills to back it up." I guess there're a whole lot of skills in the room with so many of these custom computers proudly displayed. From the black-lit ones to the painted ones to the ones with annoying flashing lights that make you want to go insane and kill someone, it was easy to tell that these people love their computers.

This gigantic room is the main reason for QuakeCon to exist, and fans seem to love it like they've never loved anything before. Gamers will forgo showers (or any kind of hygiene for that matter), food, water,

My computer is
bigger, better and
faster than yours.



sleep, and breathing to stay on their computers. As long as their stock of caffeine remains high, so will they. "It's cool to finally meet the people you've been playing with for so long but have never seen," answers Tyler Franklin of Atlanta when asked what he's enjoying the most about the show. "I didn't really know what to expect from meeting some of these people, but it's been great so far. I'm definitely coming back next year if I can." While the crowd at QuakeCon is certainly male dominated, stereotypes seem to be breaking. I actually saw some women walking around, although a few look more than a little frightened, and the stereotype of pimply-faced teenage boys was certainly broken with clean cut, normal folks setting up their rig for the days of the show. Everybody here is here to game without the worry of being judged. Everybody at the convention is happy to be there, and it shows.

THE MONEY BEHIND THE MADNESS

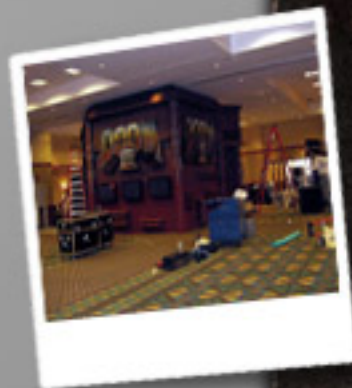
Separated by a wall from the eerily lit BYOC stands the bastion of capitalism and dream of marketing to your core audience. When QuakeCon started, there was no promotion, no hype, and little to no sponsorship. Such isn't the case anymore. Companies are now paying good money to find their way into the halls to show their stuff to the gaming elite. Sound cards, graphics cards, gaming systems, and, of course, games are all on display for show attendees. "This is the ultimate grassroots marketing outlet to the hardcore gamer. The people that attend this are the people that set the trends in buying hardware for gaming and for what games are hot and what games are not," explains id's Marty Straton. "It's only 3,000 people, but it's also the most vocal and most active users out there. It's important and the sponsors have realized that over the years. That's why you get a company like ATi putting up \$100,000 for the tournaments and making the event an integral part of the 9700 launch." The value is there, and in such a communications based world as

computer gaming, word of mouth can travel fast. Companies can see their dollars stretched a long ways through very little effort.

Showing new games at the show wasn't always the intent, but the event has since grown as a way not only to promote upcoming titles, but also to give fans a little treat. *Quake III* was the first game ever previewed at QuakeCon for the fans four years ago, and we've all seen how well that went over. So the inclusion of the *DOOM III* theater from E3 was no real surprise. I'm sure the rounds of applause following the showings sounded a bit like a cash register going off to the publisher and music to the developers that have been working so hard. *DOOM III* lead designer Tim Willits said with a smile on his face, "Hearing what the fans think about what they've seen and seeing their reaction to the demo has been great! These are the people that really matter, and hearing such a good response makes us all feel good about what we're doing." While the show's game exhibition area has grown from a sixth of the size it was when it started and is something the show's promoters would like to see grow even bigger, the games have traditionally been based around id. Whether it's directly from id, such as *DOOM III*, or a derivative thereof by way of the *Quake III* engine, in the case of Activision's *Elite Force II*.

GAMING GOES PROFESSIONAL

Sitting next to the exhibition area is a portion of the show that will undoubtedly keep growing over the years as well. The tournament portion of the show has grown from its original bragging-rights-only prize to thousands of dollars being doled out to the winners. Last year's \$50,000 *Quake III* tournament was the first cash prize to be handed out at the show, a pot that has already doubled in just one year. This year's *Quake III* tournament weighed in at just \$40,000 but was more than made up for by the *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* team tournament's \$60,000 purse. This particular tournament turned into quite the spectacle during the course of the show. Teams from around the world showed to participate in the big event. Hearing German being shouted across the room to one another was pretty entertaining. And those that



weren't lucky enough to be present to watch the fireworks could even watch it online via a webcast using spectator cameras, webcams for the tourney floor, and both play-by-play and color commentators to keep everyone up to speed on the tactics and happenings in the game. It was quite the production and certainly gives some hope into the future of gaming tournaments and promises that the tourney lineup at QuakeCon will only get better.

And while it may seem a little strange coming from a show so readily about shirking real responsibility to play games for four days, but there's some learning to be had in Mesquite as well. On the educational ticket are seminars and roundtables about mod creation and game design. "There was one mod roundtable that went so long and everybody was so excited that they opened it up for part two the next morning," says Straton. Giving gamers and aspiring designers the help they need to get going on their mods and maybe eventually get into the business is a big thing for many of these developers. And to id, it's more than just that. It's the fact that these people are using their products to develop these mods. Once you get a fan hooked, they'll be looking forward to the next iteration of your tools for the next engine. With fans getting more involved all the time in the creation of extra products for games, it's no wonder id and other developers have started taking a hands-on approach to growing the knowledge base about such things.

THE PROPHET TALKS

One of the big draws of the show nowadays, and one of the only things that draws nearly everybody away from their computers in the BYOC, is the opportunity to hear John Carmack speak. He's started making it an annual event at this point, and everybody wants to listen in on what one of the smartest and strangest men in the video game industry thinks about the new technology and the way gaming in general is and should be

headed. In his very singular style of speaking, his speech spirals into levels of technology that I'm almost positive that most people in the room don't completely understand but love to listen to nonetheless.

The end of the talk signals the beginning of the portion that the throng is really waiting for: the Q&A. It's the time that the gamers get to air out what's important to them, the developers can take notes, and some little bits of information that we've never heard before can leak through. Of course, you can also enjoy the show of the Activision PR team, cringing every time a new question is asked that they don't want answered quite yet. But Carmack is Carmack, so they can't argue too much. Questions from unanswered *Quake IV* queries to "Will there be a chainsaw in *DOOM III*?" stated in a thick Texan accent, the fans eat it up with the relish of a woman eating chocolate for the first time in a couple of years.

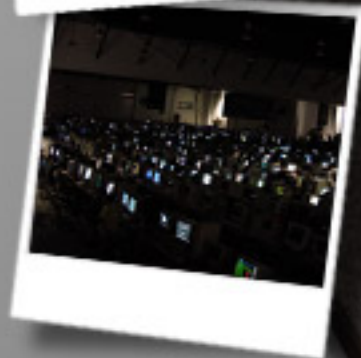
IF YOU BUILT IT...

With the popularity of games increasing all of the time and QuakeCon's reputation growing as the place to be as a gamer in August, the only way for the show to go is up. When we put Marty Straton to the question of what the future holds for the country's largest LAN party, he had this to say: "As you walk around this space, we're kind of maxed-out and busting at the seams. It's a good question and something that we're going to have to think about and plan for. The volunteers just do it because they love it. It's their spare time, so to make it much bigger would be tough -- it would be a challenge. This size is great, and we have great value for our customers. It would be nice to get more people in the BYOC room. This is the first year we've maxed out our spaces. So we'll look at that and look at getting a little more area for the exhibitors as well."

Whatever the progenitors of QuakeCon originally had planned, things are definitely going to keep expanding as interest keeps rising. Only time will tell if Mesquite can handle the growing tide of pasty gamers looking to take their town.

To find more information about QuakeCon this past year and in the future, visit the official website at <http://www.quakecon.org>. ■

— Dan Adams, IGN PC





around the office ::

The IGN offices are a safe, productive work environment – that's what we'd like you to believe, anyway. But in this monthly feature will give you an true behind-the-scenes look at what it's really like to work for IGN: the booze, the parties, the women, and the small army of baby pandas. It's all here in these revealing photos. Viewer discretion is advised.



1.



2.

3.



1. Happy Birthday Craig!

2. The ladies just LOVE Rev. Smith.

3. Welcome to Fort Fran, Doug.



Matt loves him some *Metroid Prime*. Unfortunately, Nintendo is never one to share the wealth, so Matt has been forced to spend two-thirds of each workday at the local mall gaming shop with his hands glued to the kiosk demo. Please come home, Matt – the mailbag needs updating.



MATT CASAMASSINA

EDITOR INFO ::**Publisher**

3DO

Developer

3DO

Genre

Vaporware

Peripherals

Penile Implant

Extras

- Gallagher Fan Club President
- Casamassina Speak v1.2
- Plans to watch Swept Away and Pluto Nash 100 times each on DVD

OFFICE ABUSE ::

Matt knows first hand (pun) that excessive masturbation leads to an inability to spell words properly and. Use proper, punctuation... !

MOST WANTED ::

1. Metroid Prime
2. Too Human
3. Factor 5 Project
4. Metroid Fusion
5. Legend of Zelda

For GCN news, reviews, previews, and more, visit:
<http://cube.ign.com>.

MATT CASAMASSINA

EDITOR LETTER ::

10.06.02 - Thank the stars and the heavens, Buddha and Jesus Christ, and Fran's mom: we no longer have to write stuffy, redundant previews and reviews in IGN Unplugged. Instead, we get to dish out features, which makes it all worthwhile. From now on, you'll actually find stuff in here that you probably won't find on the regular site, unless you stumble into the wrong room – the one with "Do Not Enter" printed on the door. Stay out of there!

This month, I've gone ahead and whined (a lot) about Rare, the obvious choice given all of the recent developments. I've also whipped up some thoughts about what I'd do in Nintendo's position, and with its newfound moneys, now that Rare has gone to Planet X to do nasty things with your sister.

I would like to note that Fran didn't do squat in this month's Unplugged except answer a few measly questions in the QA section. What a lazy bastard. I sincerely hope that he is punished for this. Feel free to write him hate mail and make fun of his car.

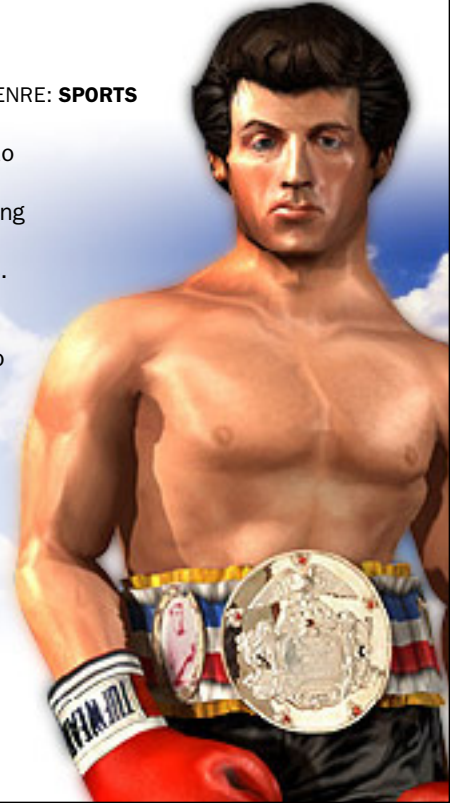
**SCREENSHOT OF THE MONTH ::**

The first GameCube screenshot of the month is certainly one of the most gorgeous we've seen on GameCube. Samus' Spider Ball, capable of sticking to magnetic tracks, glows brilliantly as she crosses a rain-drenched chasm. It really shows off the stunning art design.

WHAT THE EDITORS ARE PLAYING :: ROCKYPUBLISHER: **UBI SOFT** | DEVELOPER: **RAGE** | GENRE: **SPORTS**

Much to our surprise, Rocky has turned out to be anything but a gimmick. Its movie mode takes gamers down memory lane, experiencing Rocky through Rocky V. It includes every fighter even remotely hinted at in the movies. Remember Spider Rico, Dipper Brown, and Mac Lee? You'll have your chance to have a go at them, and this is what makes Rocky so darn entertaining.

It all feels great thanks to the solid fighting engine Rage has put in place. Not only are there basic jabs, hooks, and uppercuts, but you can also form elaborate combos. It all feels incredibly rewarding. Top it all off with the fact that the GCN version looks as good as it plays – progressive scan included – and Rocky is challenging Knockout Kings 2003 to take the top spot as the best boxer yet.





Matt Casamassina editorializes about what he'd do in Nintendo's place.

Well, it seems to have finally happened. The lovable second-party-that-could has transformed into Microsoft's wondrously expensive first-party-that-shouldn't-have. Or something like that. Rare's gone.

The Nintendo line is that Rare wasn't worth the investment. It stated that the enormous UK-based software company accounted for only 9.5% of profits in fiscal 2001 and only 1.5% in the following. Insiders said that Nintendo, in fact, had the option to buy Rare right out but refused, and instead enabled the developer to make games for other consoles. That is likely when that nasty old Xbox thing stepped in.

So that's the history of it, anyway. The details are still being fine-tuned, of course. Rare wants the licenses it

worked on and so does Nintendo. The Big "N" will positively be keeping any trademarks related to its characters – in other words, the Donkeys and the Diddys – whilst Rare struggles uphill for the others, such as the Joannas and the Kameos. It's a frustrating process, I'd be willing to wager, and in this case, I'd rather be on the Nintendo side with its army of lawyers than on Rare's.

In the end, though, it all boils down to the same thing for GameCube owners: the total absence of what was one of the console's most technically capable and inventive developers. Sources allege that Nintendo will be using some of the gazillions made in the selling of its Rare shares to fund other opportunities. This is where the point of this editorial comes into focus.



RARE'S GONE. NOW WHAT?

The big question is, how aggressive is Nintendo willing to be to fill Rare's shoes? It's clear that the publisher has no interest in pursuing a second-party model any longer, with both Rare and Left Field Productions dismissed and Retro Studios brought into the first-party family. So what? Does it shell out some cash for other games, offer incentive for third-parties to make exclusive games, or jump fully into the war and outright snap up entire companies? I have some suggestions.



DON'T MAKE THIS A HABBIT

Nintendo still has some solid development houses, specifically Retro Studios and Silicon Knights. Treat them right. Sure, Rare only accounted for 1.5% of sales in fiscal 2002, but that's because it hadn't released a single new product. Had we tallied numbers for the following fiscal year, you can bet the percentage would have been a lot higher, especially if Rare was still with Nintendo and enabled to release multiple games.

Silicon Knights' first GameCube title, *Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem*, enjoyed mild sales success upon its release, and the numbers are bound to pick up somewhat over the holiday. But even if the game had totally tanked, it's clear the company has considerable talent and must be given more chances to capitalize on it. Remember, developer DMA Design made bomb after bomb in *Space Station: Silicon Valley* and *Body Harvest* before it went on to design a little-known game called *Grand Theft Auto III*, which has sold something like four hundred billion copies around the galaxy. Retro Studios, meanwhile, has been through a lot and has proven that it has the skills to make one of GameCube's biggest and best offerings. Either of these companies could become the next Rare. So nurture them, don't abuse them.

USE YOUR NEW MONEY TO MAKE THIRD-PARTY DEALS

Microsoft's move on Rare, if nothing else, has demonstrated just how far the company is willing to go to ensure its place in the console wars. Nintendo isn't playing this game alone anymore. It has competent

competition, and if it doesn't step up to the plate and swing, it's never going to win the masses over. This means offering third-parties incentive to develop for GameCube, and, if they are creating multi-console software, to make the GCN build the one to buy. The only way to change the perceptions of gamers is to prove without doubt that GameCube has the best versions of their favorite genres. If *Madden* played and looked the best, but also had extra features on GameCube, the sports junkies would start to take notice.

Buy limited exclusives. These sell systems. For instance, if *Tony Hawk 4* shipped on GameCube three months before it hit Xbox or PS2, many wouldn't wait for the other releases and some would even consider the title big enough to pick up Nintendo's system. Consider it a long-term investment. Enough of these and the gaming community would begin to see GameCube as a console with much more than just great first-party software, and that's exactly what needs to happen. Diversity means a lot.

Don't let Sony and Microsoft walk away with the big ones. Given that *Grand Theft Auto III* sold more copies than there are grains of sand, it's a wonder that Nintendo didn't go after the DMA to fill some of its own software gaps. Sony, on the other hand, recognized a major opportunity and did. Be more watchful, follow the trends of the industry and be prepared to make investments based on where the market is going, not where it's been.

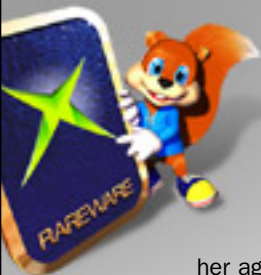
There are so many franchises to consider it's hard to list them all, but the obvious ones: *Tony Hawk*, *Madden*, *WWE brands*, *The Matrix*, *Spider-Man*, *FIFA*, *NCAA Football*, *All-Star Baseball*, *NBA2KX*, *NFL2KX*, *James Bond*, *Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars*, *Tomb Raider*, *Grand Theft Auto*, *Final Fantasy*, *Dragon Quest*, *X-Men*, *Harry Potter*, *Mortal Kombat*, *Soul Calibur*, *Tekken*, *Ridge Racer*, *Metal Gear Solid*, *Turok* and more. This is just a starting point. If I know these are big, surely Nintendo must realize it.



FILL RARE'S SHOES

Whether or not Nintendo wants to admit it, Rare left some pretty big shoes to fill. The developer was primarily responsible for a number of Nintendo's franchises and helped fill a few genres to boot. While Nintendo will keep *Donkey Kong*, *Star Fox Adventures*, and *Diddy Kong Racing* without doubt, there is some debate about whether or not Rare will leave with *Perfect Dark*, among others. If Nintendo is wise, it won't let that happen. Rather, keep hold of *Joanna Dark* and use





RARE'S GONE. NOW WHAT?



her again. If Rare is not obligated to finish the sequel, which has long been underway, then assign the series a new developer, one that's up to the task, and do the same for the *Donkey Kong* franchise.

What software house could do a *Perfect Dark* update justice? One doesn't need to go very far to find the answer. How about another UK-based team with members that worked on *GoldenEye 007*, the precursor to Joanna's adventure? I'm referring to Free Radical Design, the same guys behind the incredible 3D first-person shooter *GoldenEye 2* – uh, I mean, *TimeSplitters 2*. Free Radical is about to come into its own, and Nintendo would be very smart to invest in the developer – hell, to *buy* it outright, if possible. The group has demonstrated that it can get its software up and running beautifully on Nintendo's hardware; TS2 is silky smooth, pretty, and features what I believe are probably the best controls in any console FPS to date. More, though, it has all of the famous options featured in *GoldenEye*, some from *Perfect Dark*, and many additions, too.

Donkey Kong is another beast (literally) entirely. The franchise needs manning by a developer that has demonstrated it can make extremely well rounded, gorgeous platformers. For me, the obvious choice is Sucker Punch Productions. The studio, whose first title was the critically acclaimed N64 project *Rocket: Robot on Wheels*, has performed outstandingly since its inception only a few short years ago. Its latest, *Sly Cooper* and the *Thievius Raccoonus* for PS2, is phenomenally pretty, original, and complemented by a slick 3D engine and wonderfully tight controls. These guys know what they are doing, and they'd be brilliantly fit to take over the *DK* franchise, as far as I'm concerned.

For the record, there is a third qualified development studio that rounds out my list – one that would be suited to either genre and possibly both. Eurocom Entertainment, which is behind the technically superior *James Bond 007: NightFire* and *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* for GameCube, knows the ins and outs of the hardware, is a big house capable of multiple productions simultaneously, and has experience creating fun, well-crafted games. Not too many gamers will remember it, but the company made a title called *40 Winks* some years ago and it was intriguing. Now it has another platformer in the works that's bound to knock some people's socks off. Nintendo would be wise to make a big investment in the studio before someone else does – ahem, Electronic Arts, for instance.

TURN TO MORE THIRD PARTIES WITH YOUR LICENSES

One of the smartest things Nintendo has done in recent times is to partner its licenses with some of the biggest, most respected third-party developers around the world.

Sega with *F-Zero GC* and

Namco with *Star Fox Armada* are brilliant starts, but don't stop there. Nintendo has plenty of other franchises, and there are dozens of capable developers able to make the most out of them.

For instance, the Q-Fund sponsored Square break-off Game Designer's Studio, which is currently engaged with *Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicle*, would be the perfect choice to make a GameCube *Mario RPG*. Or perhaps a *Pokémon RPG*?

I'd dig up the *Kid Icarus* franchise and give it to a third-party with a proven artistic sense, such as Capcom Entertainment; basically, a company that could take Pit and remake him for the next-generation so that he's cooler, darker and ready to kick some serious ass.

I'd assign Namco to take the *Legend of Zelda* characters, including everyone from Link, to Oni Link, Goron, Saria, Ganondorf, Deku and Zora, or even older enemies like the wizard Agahnim, and make a 3D fighter. Not another *Super Smash Bros. Melee*, either, but a full-blown, serious brawler in the line of *Soul Calibur* complete with beautiful, realistic graphics.

I'd give Treasure the *Metroid* license and have the company create a half-traditional, half *Sin and Punishment*-like polygonal 2D/3D take on the franchise complimented by an endless stream of side exploration and fully 3D battles.

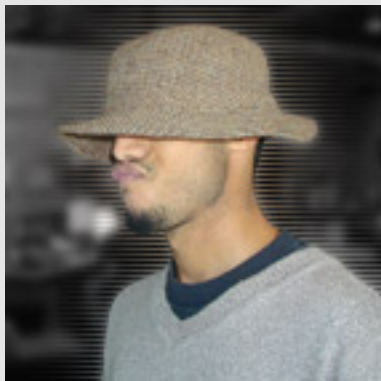
I'd unearth the *Mach Rider* series, going way back, and enlist the support of a technically unsurpassable studio – like Factor 5, for example, to recreate it for GameCube. The franchise always had a cool, edgy tone about it, and done right, with both speed and mind-blowing visuals, it could reinforce the image that Nintendo is looking to capture: that it's games are for adults, too.

Finally, I'd team with Sega to create a game, or a series, that starred not only all of the major Nintendo franchises, but all of the big Sega ones too: *Sonic* and *Mario* together for the first time. I don't see how that *couldn't* sell through the roof.

A RARE OPPORTUNITY



So there you have it. A few ideas, and these have hardly scratched the surface of what's possible – if Nintendo wants it to be, that is. Here's hoping that Rare's departure, if nothing else, lights a fire under the collective ass of the Big "N" and that it does pursue some of its options. Regardless of what happens, Rare will be missed. But the right moves on Nintendo's part could at the very least help soften the blow. ■ – **Matt Casamassina**



AARON BOULDING

EDITOR INFO ::**Publisher**

Your Mom

Developer

Prepubescent Boys, Inc.

Genre

Restaurant Simulation

Peripherals

- Bunny Slippers
- False Teeth
- Hair

Extras

- Extension Cable
- Extra Memory
- Floppy Disk

OFFICE ABUSE ::

Riding a scooter to the vending machine is not a form of exercise, despite what some IGN editors may think.

MOST WANTED ::

1. DoA Xtreme Beach Volleyball
2. Splinter Cell
3. Battlefield 1942 (Xbox)
4. Mace Griffin: Bounty Hunter
5. CounterStrike

For Xbox news, reviews, previews, and more, visit:
<http://xbox.ign.com>

AARON BOULDING

EDITOR LETTER ::

10.06.02 - The fall months are the time of year where the legacy of this year's E3 comes back to haunt us. All of the thousands of games we tried to see, remember, and write about at the big trade show are now starting to become reality, and some of them are actually sitting our hands waiting to be reviewed. In theory, we should know everything about the lineup of triple-A titles like the back of our hands.

Instead we're first flabbergasted at how much games have changed in just a few short months -- some for the better, some not for the better. In any case, we're ankle deep in all of those wonderful "fall 2002" games, bringing all of our editorial skills to bear on the games that videogame companies want you to run out and buy this Christmas or Thanksgiving, when you should be spending time with loved ones. Get ready because our comprehensive reviews will make your purchasing decisions a snap and allow you plenty of time to listen to your Uncle Mort's involuntary bodily functions. Or his longwinded stories, whichever you prefer.

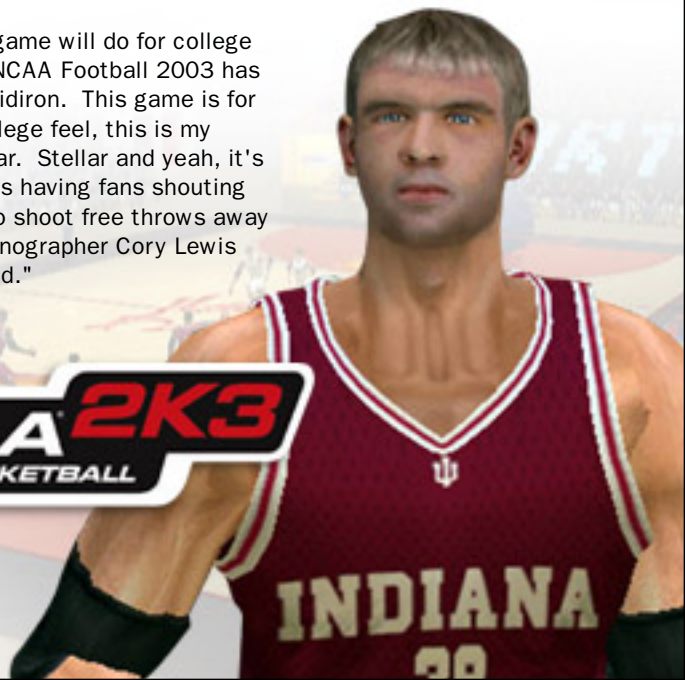
**SCREENSHOT OF THE MONTH ::**

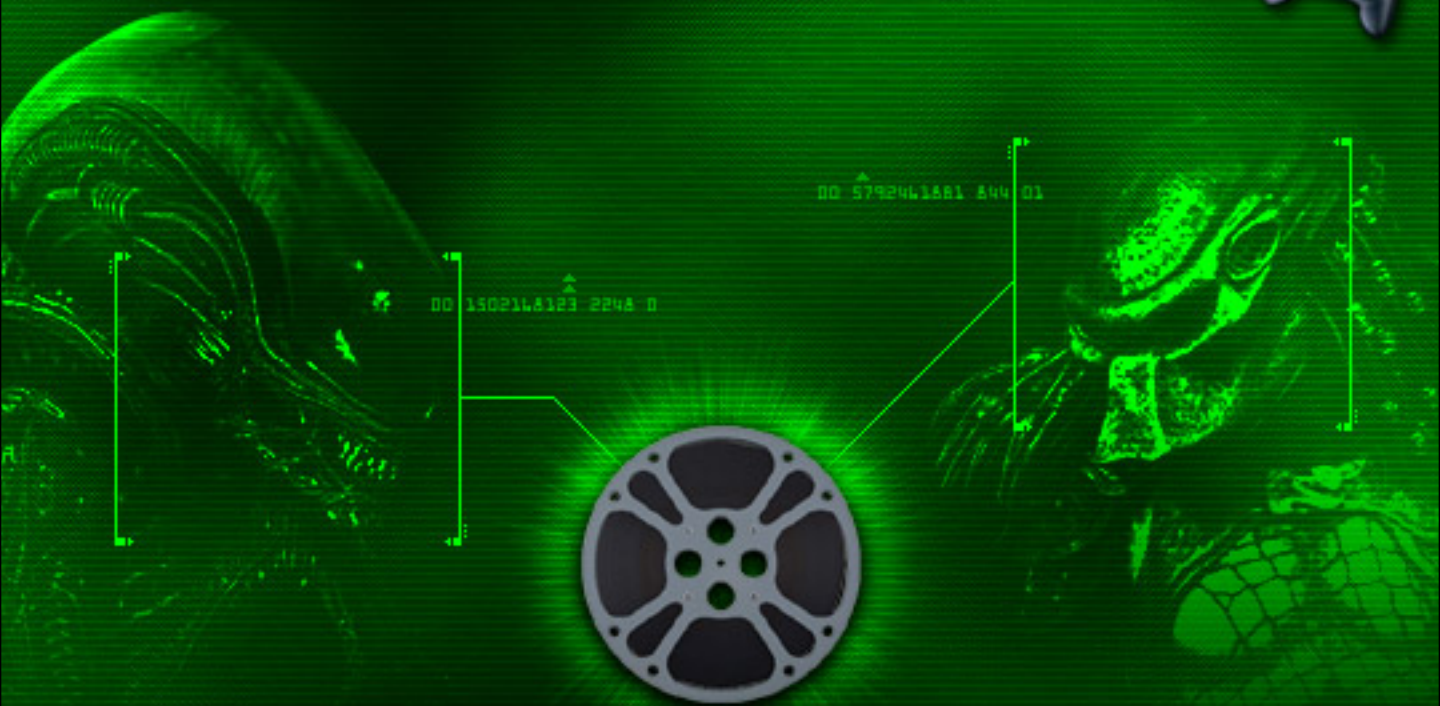
Following his amazing triple-lux-with-a-twist dive into the sewer, IGN Xbox intern Kaiser Hwang is graded. A standard test for all interns, Kaiser scores the highest mark in seventeen months and escapes with only minor cuts and abrasions.

WHAT THE EDITORS ARE PLAYING ::**NCAA COLLEGE BASKETBALL 2K3**

PUBLISHER: SEGA | DEVELOPER: VISUAL CONCEPTS | GENRE: SPORTS

Sega's college hoops game will do for college basketball what EA's NCAA Football 2003 has done for the college gridiron. This game is for real. Capturing the college feel, this is my hoops game for the year. Stellar and yeah, it's online. The best part is having fans shouting "Brick!" when trying to shoot free throws away from home. As ex-pornographer Cory Lewis would say, "It's all good."





PREDATOR^{VS}ALIENS

Two movies, not a new PC title, that contributed to videogames. But which film gave more?



The mutually beneficial relationship between movies and videogames has been nurtured and growing ever since giant rectangles masquerading as Indiana Jones, E.T., and AT-ATs graced our Atari 2600s. In today's videogame world, we see the GameCube, Xbox, Game Boy Advance, PS2, and the PC all benefiting from the creativity of Hollywood directors and screenwriters in the form of licensed products featuring characters, themes, and worlds originally designed for the big screen. But hardcore videogame fans know there's more give and take between movies and videogames than ever. They've recognized that those same moviemakers have been inspired by and blatantly ripped off concepts from their favorite form of digital recreation.

The lobby firefight scene in the 1999 blockbuster *The Matrix* is an often-cited example of how "our" games inspired "their" scripts. With the trend reversing itself and videogames now directly inspiring movie producers to make movies based on *Crazy Taxi*, *Resident Evil*, *Dead or Alive*, and more, I've got to ask the question, when was the last time Hollywood gave the world of videogames something we could actually use? For no other reason than pure admiration, I point to *Aliens* and *Predator* as the

movies that have had the most influence on the recent history – say, the last twelve years – of the videogame industry.

Sure, there was a Mario Bros movie starring a talented, yet miscast, John Leguizamo and Bob Hoskins, and even bizarre adventures in that great buzzword from the mid-1990s, "virtual reality" in *The Lawnmower Man*. But when you want to talk about films that actually contributed the greatest volume of gear, standards, and concepts used in videogames since the classic trinity of Star Wars, Star Trek, and James Bond, the one-two punch of Sigourney Weaver's *Aliens* and Schwarzenegger's *Predator* is tough to match. But you don't have to take my word for it, just take a look at the compelling proof.

Right off the bat, we can dismiss the cheesy dialog of *Predator*. Besides Governor Jesse Ventura's outstanding, "I ain't got time to bleed!" line, there's not much inspiration in what the characters say. That's the price you pay when you put an Austrian hillbilly with an equally unlikely accent in the lead role. What we got in *Predator* was the all-important concept of thermal vision and the king of all videogame machine guns, OI' Painless. Ventura's, and later Bill Duke's, shoulder-harnessed, belt-fed,

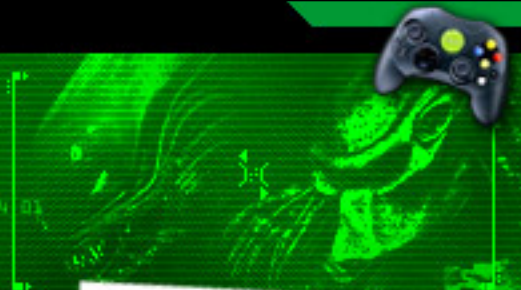


PREDATOR vs ALIENS

Continued...



00 5792461881 844 01



high-powered variation of the Vulcan machine gun used in military helicopters and planes cannot be underestimated as the chic assault weapon of the 1990s and 2000s. Every great shooter since *Doom* has had a variation of the multi-barreled spinning machine gun that can trace its roots back to Ol' Painless. There had been other movies featuring heavy-ass rotating machine guns – I remember seeing a mounted version in TV shows like the A-Team as well – but it's the way the commandos in *Predator* handled that heat that made children of the 80s jump up and take notice. When some of those kids of the MTV generation started making videogames professionally, they could've thrown in M-16s, M-60s or any other popular weapons we were being shown in G.I. Joe cartoons. But it's no coincidence that when it came down to choosing one kick ass heavy machine gun to represent all automatic weapons, Ol' Painless was the choice.

But why Ventura's machine gun instead of Stallone's in *Rambo* or even Schwarzenegger's?

The answer to that is in the question itself. Consider that Ventura still had one foot in the WWF when *Predator* was released and was by no means an action film star. But when he and the rest of the insertion team assaulted that guerilla camp and Ol' Painless was let out of the bag, he and the gun became stars because of the high pitched whine and never ending stream of lead the two of them unleashed. I wonder if Ventura knew when he read the script for *Predator* that he would be in the right place at the right time in history to make such an impact on a subculture like videogames? He made it all the way to the governor's mansion in Minnesota off the strength of voters who were teens and adolescents because of a gun in a movie that saw his character die midway through. Arnold was the star of that flick, had a forgettable weapon, and still hasn't found the stones to flip a career in politics. Coincidence? I think not.

And I would be remiss if I neglected to mention Ol' Painless' starring moment came at the hands, literally, of Bill Duke. The director and star of the 1976 classic *Car Wash* was at the trigger when Painless showed its true power and leveled several hundred square feet of forest damn near one bullet at a time. Sure, Arnold, Carl Weathers and the rest of the crew got their shots off too when they retaliated against the Predator for killing Ventura's character, but we all know which gun was doing the work. Schwarzenegger was firing grenades into the forest and still wasn't knocking anything over. When Ol' Painless finally ran dry, Bill Duke couldn't believe a gun that had fired continuously for a minute could actually run out of bullets. That's why it took awhile and a stern look from Schwarzenegger for him to realize it was okay to release the trigger.



Most PC shooters pay homage to Ventura's peacemaker with the Unreal franchise enhancing its rate of fire even more with a secondary function. Console shooters from *Turok* to *TimeSplitters* will allow you to mow enemies down with a version of Ol' Painless as well. To the extent that this heavy machine gun plays an important role in shooters, then it plays a role in the progression of videogames because shooters are consistently among the most popular games around.

If Ol' Painless brought a new level of coolness to automatic weapons, then the Predator's gear brought a new kind of science to coolness. I would've given the Predator credit for inspiring personal cloaking devices in videogames, but this concept has stormed the world of videogames just yet. (Besides, *Star Trek* already had it beat.) Throughout the first half of the movie, we don't even see the Predator character, just his point of view through thermal vision. An introduction like that definitely means something for both the technology and the character. We had seen stuff like infrared vision before in movies like *Blue Thunder*, but the dramatic graphics of what the Predator saw was new and intuitive, so that moviegoers could figure out what they were looking at, even if they didn't understand the technology. The bright green, yellow, red, black and white areas formed recognizable shapes and patterns that would obviously help in a dark environment. Nowadays, thermal vision doesn't get as much play as night vision, thanks to the Gulf War, but the Metal Gear Solid franchise and Tom Clancy games like *Splinter Cell* are keeping it alive. Maybe it's because Arnold, with all of his resourcefulness, neutralized the Predator's super sensors by wallowing around in the mud that thermal vision never lived up to its potential. In any case, no good stealth-action game has been caught with out it.

James Cameron's pivotal sequel to the 1979 hit *Alien*, proved to be the peak of the entire series of four movies and its contributions to the videogame industry are many



PREDATOR vs ALIENS

Continued...



and varied. From the female hero, to the classic lines of dialogue, to the extremely believable vision of the future, *Aliens* had more appealing videogame elements to it back in 1986 than many of today's videogames themselves. *Aliens'* greatest contribution is a simple concept but one that game programmers have missed on multiple occasions. But when they have nailed the film's frantic pacing of battle scenes, it's been a wonderful thing. The durable nature of the aliens and the space marines' barely effective conventional weaponry came together to give us that feeling of narrowly surviving from one moment to the next. You never knew which bullet, out of the dozens of rounds fired, would be the one to stop an oncoming alien – an evil, species-preserving alien that would instantly smite our heroes if it reached them. The marines had to be precise, consistently quick on the trigger and "frosty" in the face of overwhelming danger to survive just like we've learned to do in games like *Resident Evil*, *Halo* and countless other shooters and action games.

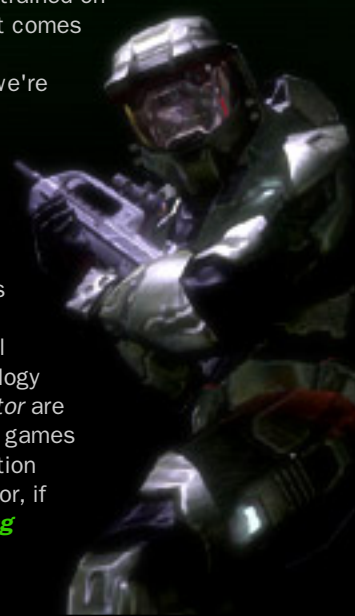
Whether it's zombies, aliens, Nazis or combinations thereof, videogames since the release of *Aliens* have a history of stacking the deck against us with hordes of soulless critters that will quickly kick our asses unless we continue to show them who's boss. I'm talking about games where you never want to waste ammo, because you know at any minute you're going to be out-manned, out-gunned, and that bit of ammunition you have won't mean jack if you don't have the skills to spend it efficiently. Think of a game like *Dead to Rights*, where you're constantly surrounded by enemies and you always find yourself calculating the best way to use the ammo you have for resolving the situation. It's no coincidence that these are the games that often give us unlimited continues, as we trial-and-error

our way through hectic situations with overwhelming numbers of enemies and limited ammo.

In the movie, it isn't like they didn't have kickass guns. The standard assault rifle that Hicks and Hudson carried along with Vazquez' badass, steady-cam assisted, auto aiming smart gun, looked and sounded like super powerful weapons from the future, but the Aliens had an insect-like mentality that neutralized these deterrents. It just didn't matter to the creatures that they'd be torn to bits, since they knew their great numbers would eventually overwhelm anything the marines could throw at them. This is why skill, rather than hardware, was a greater asset to the characters in the movie. Any videogame that consistently emphasizes a gamer's skill usually gets high marks, and so the battle sequences in *Aliens* has been an obvious example for game designers to follow.

The case of *Halo* almost makes it too easy to prove this point with the game's uncanny similarities to the movie. The success of the game is the strongest proof that we've been conditioned to expect a cinematic feel from our games because of *Aliens*, but because it's a game and not a film, we have to feel like we're in control of this otherwise well presented movie scene. If there had been no *Aliens* nor any other copycat films like *Starship Troopers* following it, how would we know that shredding Covenant troops with multiple shots from an automatic rifle would feel so satisfying? In sci-fi and war movies of the past, enemies died from one well-placed shot by our hero. Hell, in *Star Trek*, it was either be stunned or be killed when Captain Kirk came to town. But staying cool, knowing you'll eventually be rewarded with a downed enemy if you trust your skills and consistently keep your weapon trained on the target, firing rounds; all of it comes to us thanks to *Aliens*.

So sometime in 2003 when we're all knee deep in *Halo 2* cursing at phenomenal skill of the Covenant troops, or mesmerized at the beauty of *Doom 3*, let's not forget to give a tip of the hat – or the controller in this case – to the pair of movies that taught us what firepower and overwhelming odds were all about. Because when the sociology and pathos of *Aliens* and *Predator* are long gone, we'll still expect our games to give us the tools of destruction and keep us on the edge of terror, if nothing else. ■ – Aaron Boulding





DOUGLASS C. PERRY

EDITOR INFO ::**Publisher**

URMom Inc.

Developer

Neveragain Studios

Genre

Menage a Trois Studios

Peripherals

Tres Equis XXX beer

Extras

- Lime
- Tequila
- Salt

OFFICE ABUSE ::

When Doug isn't busy playing games, he likes to have tea parties with his imaginary friend Gandorf.

MOST WANTED ::

1. GTA: Vice City
2. .hack
3. Shinobi
4. Suikoden III
5. Auto Modellista

For PS2 news, reviews, previews, and more, visit:
<http://ps2.ign.com>

DOUGLASS C. PERRY

EDITOR LETTER ::

10.06.02 - The motherload is finally here.

Fall is upon us, and the games are flooding in like an elfin spell. I've spent the last four nights playing games and writing reviews until 12-3 am. As I write this, my mind is fogged with spells, pickups and bosses, as little reminders of work return me to the harsh reality of another deadline. As Cory Lewis says, "It's all good," but man, I could use some sleep, and *real soon*.

Why complain then? Because -- I simply won't have enough time to play them all. Just look at this list of stellar AAA games: *TimeSplitters 2*, *Red Faction 2*, *Ratchet and Clank*, *Sly Cooper*, *Kingdom Hearts*, *Shinobi*, *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*, *Suikoden III*, *Auto Modellista*, *Rayman 3*, *The Getaway*, *Tekken 4*, *Grandia Xtreme*, *Burnout 2*, *.hack*, *Colin McRae Rally 3*, *Wild Arms 3*, *Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, *Contra: Shattered Soldier*, *WWE SmackDown! Shut Your Mouth*, and *Rygar*, to name a few.

That's just on PS2. Here's hoping time will *indeed* be on my side.

**SCREENSHOT OF THE MONTH ::**

For us, this shot describes the pure essence of Sega's fishing game. Catching the big one -- can there be anything else so heavenly? With tackle stuffed into every pocket, the utter release from the everyday repression of life is so great that a screen caption hardly suffices.

WHAT THE EDITORS ARE PLAYING ::**SEGA BASS FISHING DUEL**

PUBLISHER: **SEGA** | DEVELOPER: **WOW ENTERTAINMENT** | GENRE: **SPORTS**

The editors here at IGNPS2 cannot stop playing the vibrant, unending brilliance of Sega's latest fishing arcade. We want to fish. We need to fish. We love fishing more than life itself, and we are driven to buy fishing games. It's as if we and the fish are one. The feeling comes deep from within a part of our body, and from that section in our spleens, kidneys, or buttocks, we are propelled into the world to buy a fishing videogame. Another fishing game. Not satisfied with the real sport, or perhaps lusting for a different sensation altogether, the small wiggle of the bait, the desire for the struggle of a poor, dumb animal struggling against the sharp hook that pierced its face confronts us, and we are dumbfounded. Stricken. Stripped of all sense. We must go fishing, or we will surely all die.



A large, stylized illustration of Crash Bandicoot is positioned on the right side of the page. He is a yellow bandicoot with large ears, wearing a brown leather harness and a brown cap. He is in a dynamic pose, with one arm raised and a determined expression. The background is a light blue gradient with a large, dark blue curved shape at the bottom right.

Revenge of the PLATFORMERS

2 • 0 • 0 • 2

IGNPS2 uncovers one of this Holiday season's biggest commodities: the return of the platform genre.

Before the rise of the CD/DVD-ROM era, the platform genre was easily the most influential and important category in all of videogames. Rising to prominence because of the amazing breakout success of the Nintendo Entertainment System's excellent *Super Mario Bros.* arcade port, the hop and jump genus was soon the most recognized and overexploited medium around.

After years of constant exposure and the advent of 3D, however, the once popular staple had become a shadow of its former self. Bad movie licenses, rehased mascot characters, and a series of innovative titles in other genres had all but sealed the fate of the once beloved platform arena. Gamers and publishers alike appeared as though they were ready to move on.

Despite the general negative attitude towards the "quaint link to gaming's past" however, a number of truly standout genre entries have still managed to seep through the cracks. Hanging on to the same old-school ideals that their forefathers had while backing them up with stellar gameplay engines, developers have still occasionally unleashed a masterpiece to the still skeptical populace. Early *Crash Bandicoot*, the *Spyro* series, and *Super Mario 64* are but a few of the champions in an ongoing struggle to win back the reality-crazy mentality that is very much a part of today's big gaming market.





Revenge of the PLATFORMERS

This holiday season, and on the PlayStation 2 in particular, the platform genre is poised to make a serious comeback. With a long list of high profile hop and boppers headed to Sony's emotion engine before the end of the year, there's never been a better time in the long history of 32-bit plus to be a platform fan. What we've witnessed is but an inkling of what's to come and only scratches the surface of what we think is the beginning of something great. Yes friends, it's the Revenge of the Platformers 2002!

SLY COOPER AND THE THIEVIUS RACCOONUS

DEVELOPER: **SUCKER PUNCH** | PUBLISHER: **SCEA** | EXPECTED RELEASE: **09/2002**

The first big title to hit the market could very well be the pinnacle of them all. Developed by the same team that assembled the underrated but fantastic Nintendo 64 genre piece, *Rocket: Robot on Wheels*, *Sly Cooper* captures the essence of what a platformer is supposed to be: slick, imaginative, and entertaining as hell.

A story of redemption and revenge, *Sly Cooper* follows our clever raccoon buddy on his quest to recover his stolen family heirloom: the Thievius Raccoonus, an ancient book of wisdom that teaches its readers how to steal goodies from evil people. Set in various locales like a hound-guarded private casino and a regal old mansion, the environments and characters are not only stunning, but also uniquely distinct with an art style not seen in any other game before it. Coupled with all sorts of neat abilities like hat-traps and line swings, your hero's abilities are rivaled only by Sony's other high profile offering, *Ratchet and Clank*.

Impressing us more than any other title at the 2002 Electronic Entertainment Expo, *Sly* ran away with the IGNPS2 award for best visuals, and was a quick runner-up for best platformer too. As time has marched on however, we've grown to appreciate the *Thievius Raccoonus* even more that we previously thought possible... and with a package like this, who wouldn't?

VEXX

DEVELOPER: **ACCLAIM STUDIOS AUSTIN** | PUBLISHER: **ACCLAIM** | EXPECTED RELEASE: **10/2002**

Sure it's available across multiple platforms, but Acclaim Studios' *Vexx* would look beautiful on any system. Based on the same engine that powers *Turok*, the animal-man out to avenge the death of his grandfather is a serious graphical powerhouse. And with over three years of development time, it had better be!

One of *Vexx*'s more marketable selling points is the game's constant shift from day to night and back again. Changing enemies and challenges based on the current time, the continuous world around our hero affects not only the aesthetics of his surroundings, but also the strategy needed to navigate it. It's nice to finally see a developer do something more with this aspect of time, rather than just use it as a visual accent.

There are other mentionables worth noting too; like the simple yet effective combo system and a series of well designed puzzles and challenges that go well beyond the typical platform fare. Inspired perhaps by the underrated darling of last year's releases *Jak and Daxter*, *Vexx* could very well be a sleeper in the making. Keep your eye on this one.





Revenge of the PLATFORMERS



TY THE TASMANIAN TIGER

DEVELOPER: **KROME STUDIOS** | PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS** | EXPECTED RELEASE: **10/2002**

Another cross-platform star, the Australian-imagined *Ty the Tasmanian Tiger* is about as old school as they come. Similar to the *Crash Bandicoot* series in multiple aspects, the shiny feline from the outback hops and jumps like a madman throughout a planned 16 stages. Additionally, the environments themselves are pretty hefty, and include everything from natural waterslides and mountain areas to lush riverbeds and tall grass plains.

What separates *Ty* from the rest of his competition is his vast arsenal of special boomerangs ala Mega Man. Utilizing special elemental versions of his favored weapon, *Ty* can toss fire, ice, and thunder-based "rangs," in conjunction with even more fantastical equipment like the X-rang, which allows you to snipe opponents from hundreds of feet away.

Locked in at a solid 60 frames per second and as personable as any mascot before him, *Ty the Tasmanian Tiger* is poised to pick up where the floundering *Crash Bandicoot* series left off. And if the finished product can live up to the vision its creators have in store for it, it just might do so... and then some.

DISNEY'S PK

DEVELOPER: **UBI SOFT** | PUBLISHER: **UBI SOFT** | EXPECTED RELEASE: **11/2002**

Rejected by U.S. studios but embraced by the Italian comic book crowd, *Disney's PK* is an alternate Magic Kingdom universe where Donald Duck has become the planet's most prominent superhero. For years, *PK* (the scientific Latin classification for 'Platyrhynchos Kineticus' or "Energized Duck") has been at war with an invading race of alien mallards, and now it's up to you to help put an end to them once and for all.

Described best as an action/platformer, *Disney's PK* holds dear a lot of the traditional values while still pushing the envelope of what you should demand from your console hoppers. Armed with an intergalactic Swiss Army Knife-type gadget, our favorite duck can not only propel himself great distances with its built-in jetpack, but also burn his opponents alive via his flamethrower.

Cel-shaded and 11 stages wide, *Disney's PK* game is a serious attempt at true Donald Duck action. Aimed at the younger genre fans out there, the space-themed adventure could be one of the top choices for parents this coming holiday.

RATCHET & CLANK

DEVELOPER: **INSOMNIAC GAMES** | PUBLISHER: **SCEA** | EXPECTED RELEASE: **11/2002**

It's been picked by many an industry insider to be one of the best games of the year, and the spiritual successor to last year's *Jak and Daxter* may be just that. A massive all-encompassing world that has more activity and style in a single level than some games have in their entire existence, *Ratchet and Clank* is the highest profile platformer on the planet.

First revealed in April, the futuristic tale of a furry tinkerer and his robot companion has garnered more buzz leading up to its eventual release than the majority of the titles in this feature combined. Allowing the player to run around as either *Ratchet* or *Clank*, gamers can go practically





Revenge of the PLATFORMERS



RATCHET & CLANK CONTINUED...

anywhere that their hearts desire. Utilizing over 35 different gadgets each with their own purposes and abilities, our duel mascots can do anything from blast foes with heat-seeking missiles to walk upside down on moving platforms.

In an air tight race with *Sly Cooper* for the top spot on many an IGN Editor's Most Wanted lists, *Ratchet and Clank* is so sprawling and huge that it could take months to accomplish everything the game has to offer. Backing up its depth with knee-slapping voice-over work and jaw-dropping attention to detail doesn't hurt its chances of being king of the platformers either. I guess we'll find out if it is this November.

SPYRO: ENTER THE DRAGONFLY

DEVELOPER: **CHECK SIX GAMES** | PUBLISHER: **UBI SOFT** | EXPECTED RELEASE: **11/2002**

If you've played *Spyro the Dragon* before, you already know what to expect: fantastic level design, imaginative characters, and a highly responsive control scheme that comes together in single collection of platform heaven. If you're new to the series, however, then stand back – this one may knock your socks off.

Moving past the tried and true idea of jumping from locale to locale, your little dragon friend flies among a plethora of bad guys, obstacles, and environments that not only dazzle you with their simple complexity, but also encourage the player to move beyond skill, and enter the realm of the expert. Helping him like never before, *Spyro* has a host of new abilities and powers that accompany his usual dragon breath with a control over the elements that EA's *Tasmanian Tiger* boasts as well.

Part of the charm of the *Spyro* series has been its ability to move beyond its child-like look and transcend into a higher level of respect among platform veterans. While it may not pose an impressive lot of new features like some of the other new titles in the genre, the developers at Check Six Games know what works, and aren't inclined to change its formula for success one bit. Proof will be in the pudding just around Thanksgiving.

DR. MUTO

DEVELOPER: **MIDWAY** | PUBLISHER: **MIDWAY** | EXPECTED RELEASE: **11/2002**

What would you do if you could transform yourself into different creatures at the drop of a hat? What if with the wave of your hand, you could turn into a mouse, a gorilla, a spider, or a list of other weird and wacky animals? That's the power that Midway is granting to gamers this November when *Dr. Muto* lands on all three major platforms, and if the demos we have laying around the office are any indicator, this could be one of Midway's top titles all year.

Playing the part of a mad scientist who accidentally blew up his home planet, you're commissioned to travel the universe and pick up the pieces of your former world in order to put it back together again. Accompanied by a Max Headroom-type robot sidekick name AL, *Dr. Muto* is about as varied as they get. As not only is there a megaton of possible transformations, but over 30 levels to use them in. Not to mention the games stellar visuals.

Not previously known for its prowess as a platform developer (the only previous notch in the belt was the Nintendo 64 version of *Gex: Enter the Gecko*), Midway is making Herculean strides with its first true genre piece. While some may argue that it'll look better on the Xbox and GameCube, there's little conflict in deciding that this sucker will be cool regardless.





Revenge of the PLATFORMERS



MALICE

DEVELOPER: ARGONAUT GAMES | PUBLISHER: SIERRA | EXPECTED RELEASE: 11/2002

The most brutal of all the games on our list, Sierra's *Malice* is one twisted little puppy. Powered by the luscious voice of No Doubt vixen Gwen Stefani, the Argonaut developed freak show opens with the lead character getting her head bitten off. From there it's a long arduous trip through hell, as the young maiden billows through demons and devils with her special magic and oversized hammer.

Originally planned as an Xbox only release before migrating over to the PlayStation 2, the dark, gothic world of *Malice* is one of the first of its kind - A platformer that takes an equal amount of pride in both its dark presentation and intuitive gameplay. And while *Conker's Bad Fur Day* certainly pushed the envelope for the genre before, this latest effort may surpass that as the most disturbing hopper ever.

Strong from both a conceptual and design standpoint, the only question that hasn't been answered as of this writing is the quality of the mechanics. Somewhat a mystery to gaming press since its announcement sometime ago, we can only hope that *Malice* can live up to its potential.

TREASURE PLANET

DEVELOPER: BIZARRE CREATIONS | PUBLISHER: SCEA | EXPECTED RELEASE: 11/2002

Another one of *Jak and Daxter's* spiritual offspring, *Treasure Planet* is based on Disney's upcoming cartoon adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. Set in the far off future, the absolutely gorgeous visual roller coaster that the movie appears to be is perfectly reflected in videogame form with tons of lighting and sourcing effects and animations that are (pardon the pun) out of this world.

In an interesting twist on the traditional platform gig, *Treasure Planet* is actually half racing game. In control of a solar-powered wind surfboard, you can zoom around fabulous looking environments while picking up power-ups and other goodies to use in the platform levels. It's a welcome diversion from the constant jumping you'd normally experience in such a game, and one that we support readily.

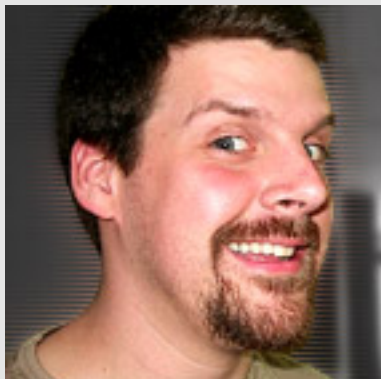
Looking good for a late November release (just in time for Turkey Day), *Treasure Planet* is sure to sell a zillion copies once the motion picture thunders into theaters. Pretty, responsive, and possessor of one of the best premises this season, families the world over have yet another reason to exercise their PS2's.

THE REST AND AN OUTLOOK FOR 2003

The list above is just a hint of what to expect this year and next. With two other games coming out of THQ's development houses (based on *Rugrats* and *Spongebob Squarepants* respectively), and a host of other in-development games that qualify or almost qualify as contenders (like Midway's *Haven* and *Crank the Weasel*, Capcom's *Maximo 2*, and Tecmo's action/platformer *Rygar*), it's a forgone conclusion that the platform genre is indeed back in a big way on the PlayStation 2. And with an endless sea of unannounced possibilities in store for the 2003 year, we can't wait to see what developers and designers can come up with next. See you at the check out counter. ■

- Jeremy Dunham





STEVE BUTTS

EDITOR INFO ::**Publisher**

TBA

Developer

The black, apparently non-carcinogenic powder they used to make us eat at Kinko's

Genre

Western Comedy

Peripherals

- two arms, two legs

Extras

- Sour cream and guacamole

OFFICE ABUSE ::

Working at IGN isn't abuse enough?

MOST WANTED ::

1. Age of Mythology
2. Halo 2
3. Combat Flight Simulator 3
4. MechWarrior Mercenaries
5. My check from Microsoft

For Xbox news, reviews, previews, and more, visit:
<http://xbox.ign.com>.

STEVE BUTTS

EDITOR LETTER ::

10.06.02 - One common assumption outsiders make about the people who work in our industry is that we spend all our time playing games. But that's simply not true. Where I used to get defensive about it (nothing spells indignation like a bitchy attitude and a slap or two), now I just calmly explain that while we *do* have the opportunity to play games for a living, there's so much more to our jobs. From answering emails to updating the site every evening, our lives are filled with countless tasks that involve virtually no game playing whatsoever. Whether we're taking a trip to see a developer so they can tell us how great their crappy game is, sitting in a sales meeting wondering how much these people spend on shoes or just merely hiding from the readers who show up here at the IGN compound, the life of a video game editor involves a lot of not playing games.

But even with all those commitments, it's still important to find some time to play games. That's why, starting this month, we're rewriting everybody's job description to include at least one eight-hour session of *Battlefield 1942* everyday. (For those of you who love *Battlefield* but prefer your action in a more strategic format, check out this month's preview of *Combat Mission: Barbarossa to Berlin*.)

**SCREENSHOT OF THE MONTH ::**

I love this month's pic of Agent 47, from the recent *Hitman 2: Silent Assassin*. 47's got his killing face on but, thinking about it, we realized there's another reason he's so frowny. He's probably angry that he's had to ruin another suit traipsing about in a Russian sewer.

WHAT THE EDITORS ARE PLAYING ::**MEDAL OF HONOR ALLIED ASSAULT: SPEARHEAD**

PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS** | DEVELOPER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS LA**
 GENRE: **FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER**

Currently I'm playing just about everything I can and still keep my head above water. Review season started a little early this year so there's no shortage of titles to keep us busy. You can tell from this month's feature that my current addiction is battlefront.com's *Combat Mission: Barbarossa to Berlin* but there are a few other gems out there conspiring to keep me up even later at nights.

Medal of Honor was the first really awesome game of 2002 and it's fitting that we'll be closing the year with the official expansion, *Spearhead*. This expansion lets the player jump behind enemy lines before D-Day, fight in the snowy forests of the Ardennes and march alongside the Soviets as they advance on Berlin. So far it has the same compelling cinematic presentation and tight design of the first game. More of the same never sounded so good.





COMBAT MISSION

BARBAROSSA TO BERLIN

PREVIEW:

Battlefront.com moves beyond *Beyond Overlord* with one of the most amazing Eastern Front games to date.

Publisher : **battlefront.com**
(available only online)

Developer : **battlefront.com**

Players : **1-2**





Two years ago, battlefront.com released one of the most comprehensive and enjoyable wargames to ever appear on the PC. Titled *Combat Mission: Beyond Overlord*, it offered unparalleled realism with a wealth of intuitive, real-world consequences. The action played out via the game's credible 3D engine in one-minute turns. You'd give your units their orders, then watch the battle play for 60 seconds. At the end of that first minute, you had the chance to issue new orders before starting another minute of gameplay. Best of all, *Beyond Overlord* handled all this without forcing the player to learn an overly abstract game system. The philosophy of *Combat Mission* is this – if it works in the real world, it works in the game. It's a bold claim, but one that a few hours with the original *Beyond Overlord* readily confirms.

Now battlefront.com is back with a sequel, *Combat Mission: Barbarossa to Berlin*. The new game focuses exclusively on the Eastern Front of World War 2 beginning in June of 1941 when the Germans launched Operation Barbarossa (their codename for the invasion of the Soviet Union) and ending finally in April 1945 as Soviet troops march into Berlin. The game features four broad geographic regions running from Finland in the north, all the way to the Black Sea in the south.

Seven nations are represented in *Barbarossa to Berlin*, each of which plays a major role in the fierce fighting of the Eastern Front. The Germans and Soviets are obvious choices but the folks at battlefront.com have also included Italians, Finns, Romanians, Hungarians and Poles. Each nation has their own exhaustive Tables of Organization and Equipment with painstakingly accurate orders of battle for each stage of the war. Unit availability will therefore be as much a matter of timing and region as much as the nation you choose.

The game contains over 300 vehicles and twice that many other units. The tanks and guns and infantry and aircraft are all painstakingly rendered both in terms of visual detail and in terms of performance. The units themselves are composed of squads, teams and individual vehicles. Each man and vehicle has dozens of performance criteria, right down to the number of grenades a particular infantryman is carrying. These details can be accessed at any time during the game in a handy pop-up screen.

With 70 total scenarios and operations, there's plenty here to keep you occupied. The scenarios are single battles taking place on maps approximately 9

square kilometers in size.

Operations are linked battles that can reach across several maps, enlarging the field to about 24 square kilometers. In most case winning involves gaining and controlling

victory locations. These are marked by flags; the bigger the flag, the more points it's worth. While you don't need many units to claim a flag, each flag has a control radius around it that must be cleared of enemy units before either side can claim possession of the flag. Some scenarios have other victory conditions, such as successfully escorting a convoy off a specific map edge for instance.

The battles usually last anywhere from 20 to 40 turns. (Some ambiguity is preserved here to keep you unsure as to when each battle might end.) The turns themselves comprise two phases – an orders phase and an action phase. Once you've placed your units



within the proscribed region at the start of the scenario, you'll have your first chance to issue orders. Since time is paused at this stage (except in timed TCP/IP games), you can take as long as you like to view the battlefield and get to know your forces.

By issuing orders, you're telling your units what to do over the next 60 seconds. You can project orders beyond this first turn but this can lead to problems as we'll explain later. For now, you'll simply need to pick a movement type for your units and select destinations or objectives. If you're confident enough, you can even string together several orders in a chain, instructing a tank to race down the road to the village square, hunt for enemy armor, and then withdraw to safety adopting a hull-down position relative to a given terrain feature. Queuing orders like this can backfire on you though; not only does it take longer for units to start executing complicated orders, adjusting them later in the battle results in even more delays.



Adding lots of waypoints or moving those from previous orders phases also results in a command delay, the time it takes for the new orders to be received and implemented by your units. There's less of a delay if you're just changing the movement type than if you're changing the waypoint. Units ordered to assault or advance on a building they're already moving towards will experience less of a command delay than if they were simply ordered to move to a new building. (Command delays can be included intentionally to help coordinate assaults.)

Once you're happy with your orders, click Go and watch the action unfold. For the next sixty seconds, you have no control over any of the action in the game. You just have to sit and watch your plan unfold. As in all other phases, the camera is unrestricted so you can move all over the battlefield. You can even rewind or pause the action to get a different perspective on an aspect of the battle.

Camera movement is quite natural. Simply bump the top or bottom of the screen to move forward or backward and hit the lower sides to strafe left or right. The upper halves of the sides of the screen allow for rotation while the number keys provide varying zoom levels, from over-the-shoulder to high-in-the-sky. You can even hit the TAB key to follow the action from behind one of your units.

Although you can tone it down a bit if you need to, the game comes with an unforgiving fog of war. Spotting enemy units isn't automatic, even if they're in plain view. A lot depends on cover and what they spotted and spotting units are doing (moving units tend to focus only on what's ahead of them for instance). There are even levels of identification so you might know that there's a vehicle up the road but not know anything else about it. Really accurate spotting

can reveal not only the type of unit but also the experience level and headcount. You can even spot a unit by sound, so you might hear some foot soldiers off in the woods before you have a chance to get a look at them.

Troops come in five experience levels – conscript, green, regular, veteran and elite – and each level increases their morale and combat effectiveness and reduces the penalties for command delays. Morale's as important here as any of the ballistics data. Troops under fire are liable to panic or even flee, more so if they're inexperienced, fatigued or far from their HQ unit. You'll also find that nothing depletes morale quicker than sending troops in to certain death. Losing three men at once is more unsettling than losing five over the course of the battle. As your men run low on ammo, there's a greater chance that they stop fighting all on their own (although this is more likely for attackers than defenders).

Things are no less precise in terms of your soldiers' fitness. There are three basic fatigue levels in *Barbarossa to Berlin* – fit, weakened and unfit. Your units tire as a result of the type of things you might expect. Constant running or carrying heavy weapons even at a walking pace will tire your troops out. But they'll also be susceptible to increased fatigue if you order them to move over poor terrain, such as deep mud or snow. The smart commander will let his infantry units rest every few turns to keep them at peak operational fitness. Fatigue recovery is also affected by your troops' overall morale. If you're at all demoralized, it's going to be much harder to attack. Since exhausted troops can't advance or assault, this is much more of a problem for the attacker than it is for a stationary defender.

You'll find that your troops' effectiveness increases when they're within range of their headquarters unit. Each HQ unit has unique leadership abilities and some even have bonuses to particular aspects of leadership (morale, combat efficiency, stealth, etc.). Like everything else in this game, the workable range of command actually depends on a variety of factors, not least of which is maintaining a clear line of sight between the units and the HQ. Vehicles equipped with radios don't need line of sight to benefit from command and control bonuses. Those vehicles without radios aren't as lucky. They have to remain close and unbuttoned (i.e. with open hatches) to be considered in command. This makes their crews more susceptible to small arms fire though, so you'll have to weigh the benefits of command versus safety.

But even buttoning up the tanks can't save you all the time. One of the most intricate scripts in





Barbarossa to Berlin is reserved for the armor penetration modeling. Based exclusively on real world data, the algorithms involved here are mixed with a healthy (and historically accurate) dose of randomness to simulate the variations in shell quality. When a projectile strikes a vehicle, the game's 3D engine provides the impact point and angle. This even includes things like the tilt of a tank on a hill or slope. Once that's determined, the game considers the shape of both the armor and projectile and calculates the kinetic energy of the shot to determine how far (if at all) it penetrates the armor.

The Soviets were known for using low-quality, hard armor that frequently flaked (or spalled) off on the inside. This meant that even when a projectile failed to penetrate the armor, it could still send splinters and fragments of armor flying around the cabin of the vehicle. This makes Soviet tanks more vulnerable to small arms fire than their German counterparts.

Since it's the ricochet of armor and projectile shards within the cabin of the vehicle that spells doom for its crew, much depends on the mass of the armor sent inside as well its likelihood to fragment. You'll find that armor-piercing shot gets through the armor better but that armor-piercing shells actually do more damage once inside. Ammo effectiveness varies year by year and from nation to nation. The Russians for instance, used uncapped armor-piercing ammo until April of 1944. Afterwards they used ballistic-capped armor-piercing rounds that had a blunt nose and was better for gripping sloped armored surfaces. For their part, the German's see hollow-charge shell armor penetration steadily improve throughout the war.

As is fitting for the conflict it recreates, *Barbarossa to Berlin* also includes over 15 types of fortifications – everything from bunkers to trenches to foxholes is included. Foxholes are for one or two men only and offer a slight defensive bonus. (Defenders in certain scenarios have the option to place foxholes to their rear in case the men need to fall back.) Trenches are a bit more versatile as they allow your units to move from one area of the battlefield to another without exposing themselves to enemy fire.

The 20x20m minefields that can be strung across the map also count as a type of fortification. They come in various types – from anti-personnel to anti-tank to the aboveground daisy-chain mines. With the exception of the daisy-chains, you won't spot these mines until you're right on top of them. Once you do

spot them, they can be cleared one of three ways. First, you could walk on them, sacrificing units to clear a path. While it's a strategy that some have actually used in the real world, it makes more sense to preserve your

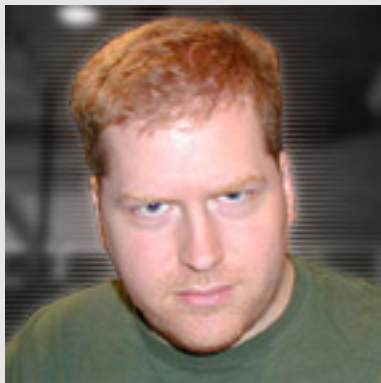
units and take out the mines from a position of safety. A safer bet would be to fire high explosive shells at the field in the hopes of taking some of the mines out.

But the best method of all is to bring in your combat pioneers. These guys are equipped with demolition charges that, given enough time, can completely clear the path ahead of you of mines. Demo charges also work for destroying enemy bunkers but the combat pioneers have an even better tool for that job: flamethrowers. There's no quicker way to force the enemy to abandon his position than by filling it with spouts of fire.

There are hundreds of things we haven't even covered yet, but that's the beauty of this game: You can spend weeks and weeks playing and still not even experience a tenth of all that it has to offer. There's a free demo available on battlefront.com that lets you try out two scenarios for yourself. It's a great way to brush up your tactics in preparation for the full game's release later this October. ■

– Steve Butts





CRAIG HARRIS

EDITOR INFO ::**Publisher**

Just One Guy Entertainment

Developer

Wendy's Value Menu

Genre

Massive Online Adventure

Peripherals

e-Reader Compatible (just swipe card through slot)

Extras

Noisy-ass Saturn with Custom Dangling Yoshi

OFFICE ABUSE ::

Craig was over and done in the land Down Under.

MOST WANTED ::

1. Metroid Fusion
2. Metroid Prime
3. Animal Crossing e-Reader Collection
4. NES e-Reader Collection Vol. 2
5. Legend of Zelda: Link to the Past Advance

For GBA news, reviews, previews, and more, visit:
<http://gba.ign.com>.

CRAIG HARRIS

EDITOR LETTER ::

10.06.02 - What's old is new again. In last month's Unplugged, we told you about Nintendo's series of e-Reader cards that lets you scan in classic NES games into the Game Boy Advance. Now size is obviously limited, with many NES games being 64K to 128K, but think about the possibilities for a second. If Nintendo ever releases the e-Reader development kits to third parties, a whole slew of NES games that you haven't seen in two decades could suddenly ship for the GBA for the price of a Happy Meal.

What's even cooler: back in the days of the 2600, games were rarely larger than 4 KB, something that can easily fit on an e-Reader card if, say, Activision ever wanted to create a collection of their old games on the Atari system. The only issue: how to get the GBA to emulate a 2600? Chances are, programmers would have to build the games from scratch...but considering the art assets in the old games, they most likely could port the games without increasing the original file size of the Atari cartridge.

I can't wait to see what 2003 holds for e-Reader cards...can you?

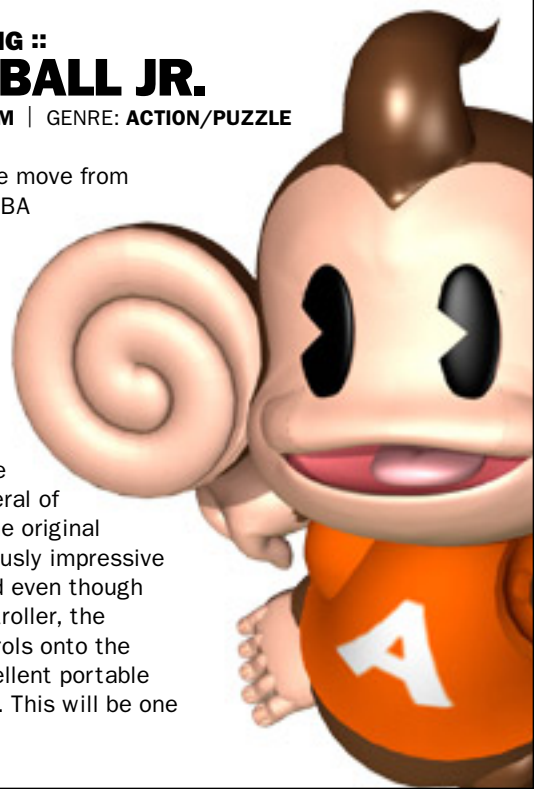
**SCREENSHOT OF THE MONTH ::**

Midway completely screwed up the Mortal Kombat series on the GBA with last year's Mortal Kombat Advance. But this is hopefully their apology: Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance. Just look at the character models, the 3D floor, the reflections. And of course, the blood!

WHAT THE EDITORS ARE PLAYING ::**SUPER MONKEYBALL JR.**

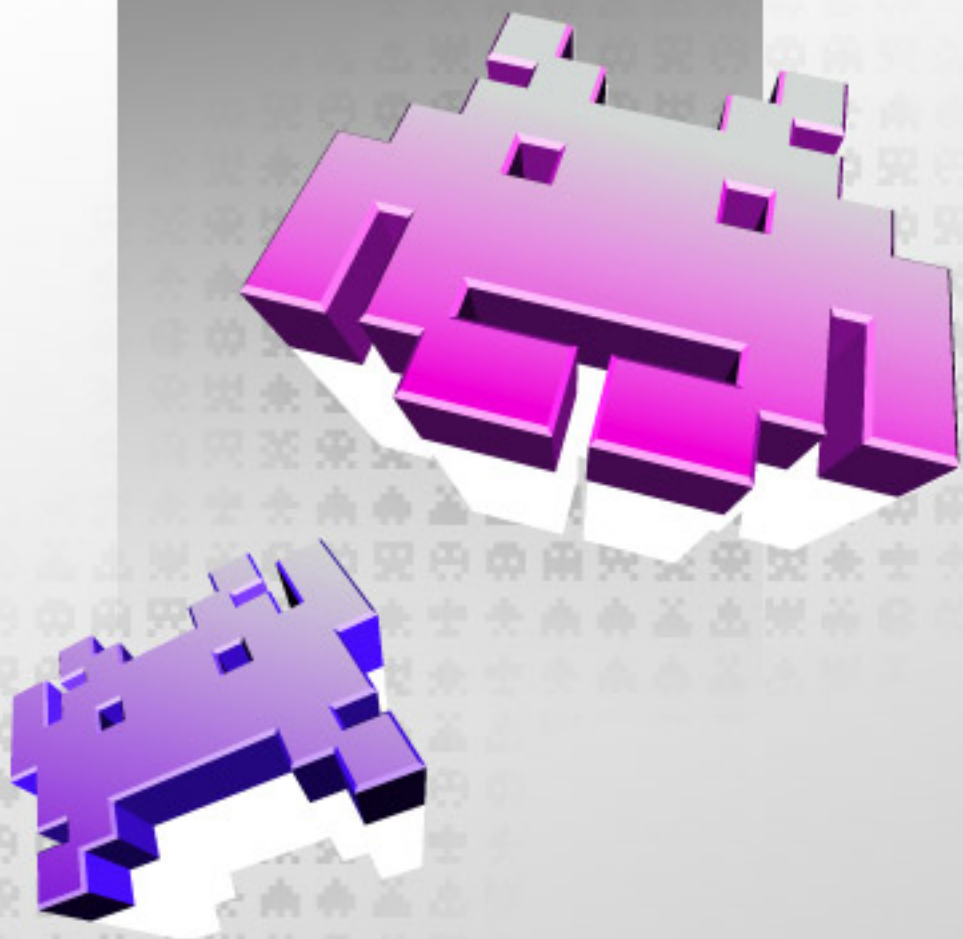
PUBLISHER: THQ | DEVELOPER: REALISM | GENRE: ACTION/PUZZLE

Normally, when a 3D game makes the move from console to Game Boy Advance, the GBA developers compromise the game's design into a more handheld-friendly two-dimensional design. After all, the Game Boy Advance doesn't exactly have the excessive processing horsepower of a GameCube. But that hasn't stopped Realism in attempting to recreate the Sega action game to the portable system. The GBA game features several of the same levels and mini-games of the original GameCube hit...while offering a seriously impressive 3D engine to drive the gameplay. And even though the GBA doesn't have an analog controller, the developer worked analog-esque controls onto the system's D-pad. The result is an excellent portable recreation of a great GameCube title. This will be one great title to pick up this holiday.





back to the BASICS



Old-school arcade gamers have a lot
to enjoy on the **GAME BOY ADVANCE**



You're sitting at the airport, waiting for your flight to taxi into the gate fifteen minutes late. You've finished your sports page, the crossword puzzle, and the conversation with the old lady with 17 grandkids isn't going anywhere. A quick game of Ms. Pac-Man sure would hit the spot right about now...

The Game Boy Advance's benefit over the consoles is easy: it's a system that can be whipped out, powered-on, played for a few minutes before you need to pocket it again. And sometimes you need that gaming fix without getting involved in plots of evil wizards, giant rampaging marsupials, or kidnapped princess' roommates. Time to go back to the basics.

Back in the Golden Age of Gaming, circa 1977-1984 or so, game designers didn't have the luxury of storylines or elaborate graphic sequences. Their focus was strictly on gameplay, and the challenge of beating the high score was more important than actually finding out if the game actually had an ending. Which makes these classics prime choices to have in your Game Boy Advance library, since they're made to be picked up and played in single-shot intervals.

And luckily, several companies that were around in those days are still around in some form or another today, and these companies have taken their backlog of classics and converted them for play on the Game Boy Advance. While some of these compilations are better ported than others, most of them are accurate enough to bring that sense of nostalgia and to scratch that temporary gaming itch that seems to tingle at the strangest of places.

NAMCO MUSEUM

Publisher:

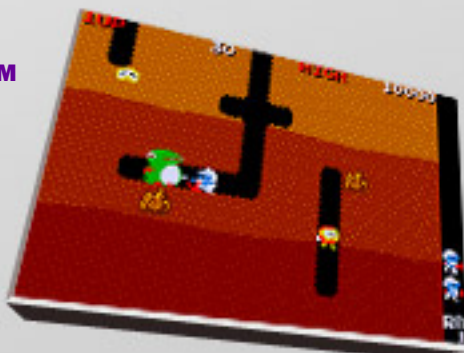
Namco

Developer:

Mass Media

Released:

June 2001



This compilation pack is easily one of the most popular on the Game Boy Advance for one specific reason: Ms. Pac-Man, one of the finest games ever created, with its timeless gameplay, pick-up-and-play design, and ever-increasing difficulty. Ms. Pac-Man is superbly accurate in its translation on the Game Boy Advance, though the development team had to offer two different ways of displaying the action; players can either view the mazes in a full-screen fashion but lose the accurate arcade resolution, or they can zoom in on the action with accurate graphics, forcing the screen to scroll in order to view the entire maze. Either way, the gameplay is what matters, and this conversion is spot on.

Oh, and there are other worthwhile games in this package, too: Dig Dug, an accurate port of the classic arcade game, where players burrow through layers of dirt, inflating enemies with their handy-dandy air compressor. Pole Position is one of the earliest 3D-style racing games ever designed for the arcade, recreated near perfectly, right down to the roadside billboards advertising Namco classics. Galaga's here too with its alien-blasting gameplay, as well as its more basic precursor, Galaxian – though Galaxian doesn't seem as welcome as the other four games in the package due to its, well, overall dull gameplay. But at least the classic sound effects will bring you right back to 1979.

The entire Namco Museum package is absolutely worth it, and at the very least you're getting four nifty extras in addition to an excellent version of Ms. Pac-Man.

PAC-MAN COLLECTION

Publisher:

Namco

Developer:

Mass Media

Released:

June 2001



Where Ms. Pac-Man is the game that will sell Namco Museum, the entire package of Pac-Man games is the selling point for this group of arcade classics from Namco. There are four games in this cartridge, each one equally addictive in their own ways.

Like the Ms. Pac-Man included in Namco Museum, the classic arcade game Pac-Man on the Game Boy Advance has two ways of viewing the action...either in a full-screen fashion or a zoomed in perspective. Both have their pros and cons, and it's all a matter of personal preference...the action is identical either way.

The other three games might not be familiar: Pac-Man Arrangement was a Namco arcade update released in the 90s that featured enhancements to the classic gameplay,



as well as improvements in the graphics and sound department. There's a new ghost to contend with that has special ghost-melding capabilities, as well as mazes that go up, down, over and under itself. Not to mention a few crazy power-ups as well. Pac-Mania was released in the late 80s as a 3D Pac-Man, giving it a very CG look to its graphics. The game also features a new gameplay element: the ability to leap over ghosts whenever needed...though this gets a little tricky when the more difficult ghosts learn that move. And then comes the strange Tetris-esque Pac-Attack, a puzzle game where players match ghosts up, arranging them in a way that will wipe them out with a well-placed Pac-Man token.

Both Pac-Man Collection and Namco Museum are absolute must-haves, though they were released during the system's launch and might be a bit hard to come by.

KONAMI COLLECTOR'S SERIES: ARCADE ADVANCED

Publisher:

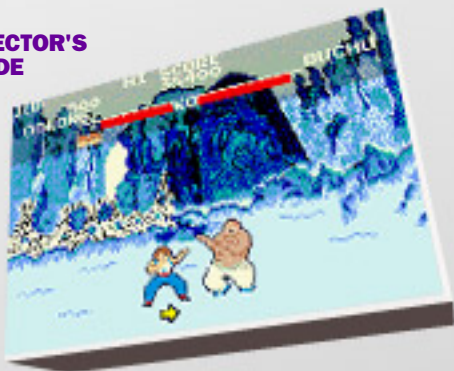
Konami

Developer:

Konami

Released:

March 2002



It seems like every classic collection has one classic that's meant to sell the whole package. And in the case of Konami, that one game is Frogger. The classic toad-highway-hopping arcade game is back and recreated near perfectly on the Game Boy Advance in Konami Collector's Series: Arcade Advanced. The differences between the original and the GBA rendition are merely cosmetic: the game screen now scrolls from highway to river due to the difference in resolution, and the familiar theme song has been altered to something near unrecognizable. Why the tune has changed we'll never know, but it doesn't change the fact that Frogger is a completely enjoyable pick-up-

and-play action title.

Arcade Advanced also features five other classic arcade conversions, accurately represented on the GBA screen. Scramble is an old-school side-scrolling shooter that predates Konami's Gradius series. Time Pilot is a non-stop action shooter that features a jump across several time periods. Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D-Minor is the theme song to Gyruss, a clever 360 degree take on Namco's Galaga. Konami's Yai Ar Kung Fu makes a return to the scene, one of the first street fighters ever to hit the arcade. And the most recent classic in this package is Rush'n Attack, a side-scrolling action platform that takes place during the cold war.

Konami's compilation pack is definitely the most thorough. Not only did the developers recreate six classic arcade games accurately on the GBA, they also included link cable play for two player action in four out of the six games...and you only need one copy of the game to take advantage of this feature. Also, the familiar Konami code, (Up, up, down, down, left, right, left, right, B, A) has an effect on all six games in this pack...from improving the graphics to adding an extra level or two to the challenge.

MIDWAY'S GREATEST ARCADE HITS

Publisher:

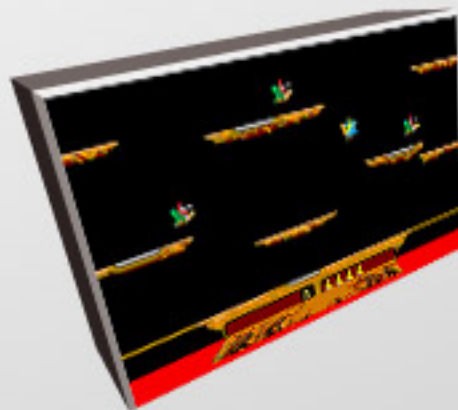
Midway

Developer:

Pocket Studios

Released:

November 2001



Where most arcade classic conversions are top-notch on the Game Boy Advance, this compilation of four Midway titles absolutely, positively, without a doubt, must be avoided...even if you didn't grow up on these games.

What this collection is supposed to contain, is four classic Williams arcade games: Joust, the ostrich-riding game that challenges you to topple buzzard-backed knights. Robotron 2084, a classic shooter that inspired the more violent Smash TV. Sinistar, a nifty, fast-paced space blaster that puts a tiny ship against a gigantic evil mechanical beast. And Defender, the true original...save the humanoids.

What this collection gives you is four terrible conversions of these arcade classics. The developer that worked on these games had any attention to detail paid during the porting process, and each of the games have serious gameplay flaws and graphic glitches that turn the classics into terrible designs. Joust doesn't have the necessary two-player support, Defender has awful slowdown, Robotron can't control accurately, and Sinistar's screen visibility is almost unplayable.



Just because it has "classic" on the box doesn't make it so. Stay away from this one.

ATARI ANNIVERSARY ADVANCE

Publisher:
Infogrames
Developer:
Digital Eclipse
Released:
April 2002



Atari, the company, is long gone...they were sold off several years ago to Hasbro, who was in turn purchased by Infogrames. At least Infogrames knew what it was getting into, for the company immediately started reprising some of the classic Atari brands in both remakes and classic compilations. And one of them has made it to the Game Boy Advance.

This six-pack of classic Atari arcade games for the GBA includes what they call "meta-emulations" of the originals. Whatever that means...the games are pretty excellent conversions of Asteroids, Battlezone, Centipede, Missile Command, Super Breakout, and Tempest. The developer even included modes for Super Breakout, Centipede, and Tempest to reproduce the vertical monitor on the GBA...by pressing a specific button, the image will rotate 90 degrees, giving the games a more accurate arcade representation. You just have to play with the GBA tipped on its side.

The problem with Atari Anniversary Advance's overall package: each of the original games, with maybe the exception of Asteroids, used specialized controls that just can't be accurately reproduced on the Game Boy Advance's directional pad, two action buttons and two shoulder switches. Missile Command and Centipede both utilized trackball controllers to give precise movement in

every possible direction, Super Breakout and Tempest featured a knob mechanic to make left and right movements as fluid as possible. And, of course, there's Battlezone, which doesn't give the full tank experience without the periscope to look through.

Still, the emulations of each of the six games are very accurate on the small system, despite having more limiting controls...and who can say no to a little Asteroids, anyway, huh?

SPACE INVADERS

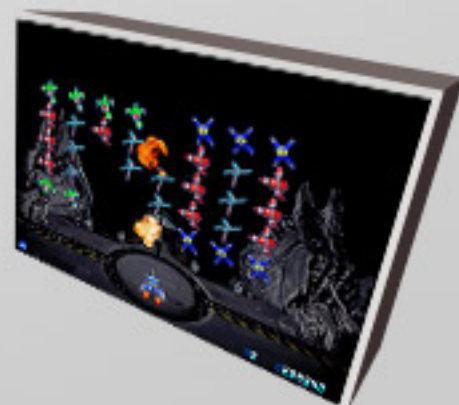
Publisher:
Activision
Developer:
Torus Games
Released:
March 2002



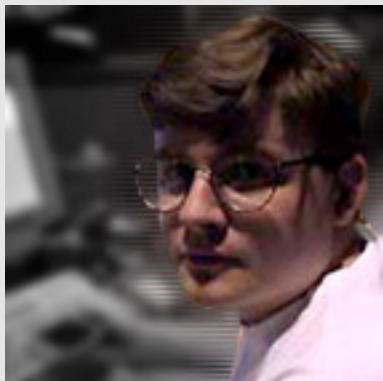
Okay, so this game isn't a classic compilation...it's a remake of a single classic arcade game, one of the originals released in the late 70s, Space Invaders. The remake is an excellent game in its own right, but we're here to talk about the classic version...which is here in a perfect state.

Back when Space Invaders was released, videogames were still being produced in black-and-white. It was cheaper that way. Space Invaders cheated, though, with the developers putting colored cellophane over the screen in specific spots...so when the aliens dropped down a couple of layers, they'd change a different hue. Crude, but effective. The classic version of Space Invaders in this GBA features the same monochromatic graphics, mimicking that colored cellophane effect...right down to the misalignment where aliens will have a line or two of a wrong color because the cellophane was layered incorrectly. It's actually quite funny to see.

The actual game is really well represented, with its accurate sound effects of the laser blast and constant pulsing tone of the advancing alien threat. It is disappointing to discover that, even though the main game features cartridge save, this save doesn't carry over to the classic...so the high score you earn won't stay in the game's memory. ■



— Craig Harris



JEREMY CONRAD

EDITOR INFO ::**Studio**

Lucasfilm

Genre

Sci-Fi

Peripherals

Lightsaber

Extras

- T-16 Skyhopper
- Thermal Detonator
- Midichlorians

OFFICE ABUSE ::

Jeremy saw *The Lord of the Rings* twelve times in theaters and refuses to stop watching the DVD.

MOST WANTED ::

1. Natalie Portman
2. Episode II DVD
3. Extended LOTR DVD
4. Back to the Future DVD
5. Spider-Man DVD

For DVD news, reviews, previews, and more, visit:
<http://dvd.ign.com>

JEREMY CONRAD

EDITOR LETTER ::

10.06.02 - Hi there. You may notice some changes in the Entertainment section of Unplugged this month, and that's because DVD and FilmForce will be alternating each issue. That means that this month you'll get a DVD feature, while next month it'll be something from FilmForce.

This month, you can check out the IGN DVD Holiday Preview. The months of October through December are always the biggest when it comes to DVD releases, and this year will be the one of the best yet. We've gone through the release list and chose the few DVD releases that are so big that nothing else can possibly compare.

In terms of releases this month, you can pick up big DVDs such as *Beauty and the Beast*, *E.T.*, and *The Sum of All Fears* and check out *Red Dragon* in theaters. Next month, things get very cool with both *Episode II* and the extended *LOTR* on DVD and *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* and *Solaris* in theaters!

**SCREENSHOT OF THE MONTH ::**

In this extended scene on the *Episode II* DVD, Padmé tries to comfort Anakin after his slaughter of the Tuskens by saying, "To be angry is to be human." Anakin responds with, "I'm a Jedi. I know I'm better than this." It's a scene that should've never been cut.

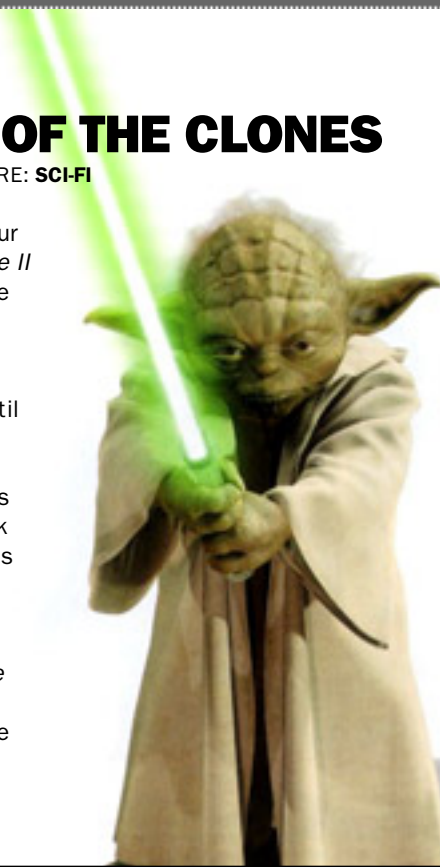
WHAT THE EDITORS ARE WATCHING ::**EPISODE II: ATTACK OF THE CLONES**

STUDIO: 20TH CENTURY FOX/LUCASFILM | GENRE: SCI-FI

The disc that is taking up the most time in our DVD players right now is the amazing *Episode II* DVD. This second Star Wars DVD features the best live-action transfer for any DVD yet released. The clarity and detail of this direct-digital transfer is simply unmatched, and it's very doubtful that anything will surpass it until *Episode III* hits DVD in 2005.

But the transfer isn't the only great thing about the disc. Its Dolby Digital 5.1 EX mix is just as impressive as the amazing soundtrack on last year's *Episode I* DVD. Also, disc two is packed full of excellent special features including the great hour-long documentary "From Puppets to Pixels" that takes viewers inside ILM to witness the creation of *Episode II*'s digital characters.

Even in the light of the Extended *LOTR*, the *Episode II* DVD is one of the best releases of 2002. Don't miss it.





HOLIDAY DVD PREVIEW

Three months packed
full of awesome
DVDs are on the way.

The holiday season is once again upon us, and as usual it's the time when the studios bring out their big guns in terms of DVD releases. There are more key releases in the three-month period of October through December than at any other time.

If you remember last year, there were some pretty major discs hitting store shelves. The DVD releases of Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the entire *Godfather* trilogy, *Citizen Kane*, and *Star Wars Episode I* all arrived in stores last year. That is a pretty big holiday season, but this year is looking to be just as impressive, if not more so.

In addition to there being a huge number of titles released this holiday season, there are also a few very big releases.

While some recent movies such as *Minority Report*, *The Road to Perdition*, and *The Bourne Identity* may still be announced for release on DVD before the end of the year, no releases will be as big as the ones that are included in this list.



BACK TO THE FUTURE

Genre: Sci-Fi

Rating: PG

Release Date: 12/17/02

Price: \$39.99



Movie fans have been waiting for the *Back to the Future* trilogy to hit DVD since the format debuted in 1997. After years of false starts and crushed hopes, the popular trilogy will finally be released in disc form this December.

Featuring all-new anamorphic widescreen transfers (as well as full screen) and Dolby Digital 5.1 audio, all three films are included in a single box. Extras on the discs include commentary by Michael J. Fox, director Robert Zemeckis, producer Neil Canton, and producer & screenwriter Bob Gale, outtakes, deleted scenes, Hover Board effects tests, *The Making of Back to the Future* featurette, *The Secrets of the BTTF Trilogy* featurette, "Universal Animated Anecdotes", Huey Lewis Music Video, production archive, teaser and theatrical trailers, and more.



BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

Platinum Edition

Genre: Animation

Rating: G

Release Date: 10/08/02

Price: \$39.99



Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* is the only animated feature film to be nominated for Best Picture, and it's now finally seeing release on DVD in the form of a two-disc Platinum Series set.

Disc one will include not only the theatrical edition of the film, but also the special edition that showed on IMAX screens earlier this year, as well as the work in progress version of the movie that was originally shown at the 1997 New York Film Festival. Your audio and video options will include a new 1.66:1 anamorphic transfer and a new Dolby Digital 5.1 mix that was created for the recent IMAX release. There's even commentary from the filmmakers, karaoke musical numbers, and games. But that's only the first disc!

Moving on to the supplements, one sees that Disney has tooled this disc perfectly to both the casual DVD viewer as well as the film buff. Mrs. Potts guides viewers through the story and characters in multiple featurettes, while Chip presents interactive games for kids to play with.

The film buff will find a whole bunch of in-depth featurettes that dive into the production of this classic animated film. They'll find alternate versions of key scenes, animation tests, character design galleries, early pencil animation, and so much more that it'll take months just to get through it all.

As with the *Snow White* release, *Beauty and the Beast* will only be available on DVD until the end of the year. So if you don't want to miss out on one of the best DVDs of the year, you'll want to grab this one on October 8th.



E.T. THE EXTRA TERRESTRIAL

Genre: Family

Rating: PG

Release Date: 10/22/02

Price: \$22.95/\$69.95



The film that many consider to be among Spielberg's best will receive two DVD releases on October 22nd. The first will be a two-disc "Collector's Edition" that includes the 20th Anniversary edition of the film in anamorphic widescreen or full screen and both in Dolby Digital and DTS audio.

Extras will include an all-new interview titled "20 Years Later with Steven Spielberg," a live performance of John Williams conducting the score to the film at the 20th Anniversary premier, an isolated live John Williams score, "The Evolution of E.T." featurette that chronicles the development of the classic film, a space exploration featurette, the popular 20th Anniversary reunion special where Spielberg and the cast reunite and remember making the movie, DVD ROM features, and much more.

The second release will be the "Ultimate Gift Set" for about \$70. The set will include both versions of the film, a bonus features disc, a complete script, the remastered CD soundtrack, and a collectible senitype. This Gift Set is the only way to own the original version of *E.T.* on DVD.

Both releases will only be available for ten weeks before being taken out of print.



LOTR: THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING Special Extended Edition

Genre: Fantasy
Rating: PG-13

Release Date: 11/12/02
Price: \$39.98



Announced before the two-disc theatrical release hit stores, the four-disc extended edition of The Fellowship of the Ring will arrive on November 12th, and be one of the biggest DVDs of the year.

The first two discs will contain the 288-minute cut of the film in addition to Dolby Digital 5.1 EX and DTS 6.1 ES soundtracks and four commentary tracks that will include Peter Jackson, Fran Walsh, Elijah Wood, Ian McKellen and Academy Award® winners Richard Taylor, Andrew Lesnie, Howard Shore, Jim Rygiel, Randy Cook...and many more.

Disc two explores the adaptation of the classic book to the screen. Through multiple behind-the-scenes features, you'll see how Peter Jackson and crew translated Tolkien's extensive text into a film. You'll be taken inside WETA Workshop to see the creation of the film's lush look, go on a tour of New Zealand for the scouting process, sit in on early story meetings, and much more.

The final disc in the set looks at the production of the epic. Viewers will experience a day in the life of a Hobbit, hear stories from the set, see extensive and in-depth visual effects breakdowns, and much more.

This extended edition will be available in a four-disc set as well as a special Gift Set that includes the National Geographic Beyond the Movie LOTR special, trading cards, and Argonath bookends designed by Sideshow/WETA.



MONSTERS, INC.

Genre: Animation
Rating: G
Release Date: 9/17/02
Price: \$29.98



Disney's other major two-disc release for the year arrives a little less than a month before Beauty and the Beast. Pixar's Monsters, Inc. receives a two-disc special edition that's just as impressive as their previous DVDs.

Disc one of the set includes a direct-digital transfer of the film available in full screen and anamorphic widescreen formats. Audio is available in Dolby Digital 5.1 EX as well as a Dolby Digital 5.1 EX sound effects only mix. The commentary in the disc includes Director Pete Docter, Co-Director Lee Unkrich, Executive Producer John Lasseter and Executive Producer and Screenwriter Andrew Stanton.

Similar to the Beauty and the Beast set, Monsters, Inc. is split up so that both the casual DVD viewer and the film buff will find something to enjoy on the disc. In the "Monster World" area, viewers will find fun games and activities that draw them into the world of Monsters, Inc. They'll also be able to view all of the outtakes that were added to the film during its theatrical run, the new short "Mike's New Car", and a teaser trailer for Finding Nemo.

The film buff will want to dive right on into the "Human World" area for an in-depth look at the development and production of the movie. In addition to all of the extensive animation tests and character design areas, one will also find abandoned concepts and much, much, more.



SPIDER-MAN

Genre: Action

Rating: PG-13

Release Date: 11/01/02

Price: \$24.98



With over \$400 million in the bank, Spider-Man was the biggest hit of the summer, and possibly the year. In November, the webhead will swing his way onto DVD with a packed two-disc special edition.

On the first disc in the set you'll find the movie in anamorphic widescreen and Dolby Digital 5.1 audio in addition to two commentary tracks. The first is by Sam Raimi (director), Laura Ziskin (producer), Kirsten Dunst & Grant Curtis (co-producer), while the second features John Dykstra (special effects designer) & the Visual Effects Crew. You'll also get branching "Web-i-sodes", two music videos, trailers, and DVD ROM fun.

The second disc includes some promotional "making of" features such as the HBO First Look and the E! "Spider-Mania" special. There are also screen tests, costume and makeup tests, a gag reel, Spider-Man documentaries, and more.

STAR WARS EPISODE II

Genre: Sci-Fi

Rating: PG

Release Date: 11/12/02

Price: \$24.98



One of the highest-selling DVDs of last year was Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace. The disc featured an incredible Dolby EX sound mix, and an excellent bunch of special features that made it one of the best discs of 2001. This year, Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones arrives on a two-disc set that looks to be even better.

Featuring a transfer taken directly from the digital source, Attack of the Clones also features a Dolby Digital 5.1 EX soundtrack, and audio commentary by George Lucas; Producer Rick McCallum; Editor and Sound Designer Ben Burtt; Visual Effects Supervisors Pablo Helman, John Knoll and Ben Snow; and Animation Supervisor Rob Coleman.

Disc two will include eight deleted scenes completed just for this DVD release, a featurette titled "From Puppets to Pixels" that chronicles transforming Yoda into a CGI character, a sound featurette titled "Films Aren't Made; The Escape", "State of the Art: The Previsualization of Episode II" details the Animatics of Episode II, the 12-part web documentary series from starwars.com, the "Across the Stars" music video, a visual effects breakdown, the R2D2 "Beneath the Dome" trailer, theatrical trailers and TV spots, posters and advertising campaign, DVD ROM exclusive content, and more.

— Jeremy Conrad





MIKE WILEY

EDITOR INFO ::**Manufacturer**

MMW Robotics LTD.

Model

Definitely not

Release Date

02.03.71

Price

30 Pesos

System Requirements

Bourbon

OFFICE ABUSE ::

When Mike was born, the doctor was very confused, and the nurses died of heartache.

MOST WANTED ::

1. Audigy 2
2. Logitech Z-680s
3. Nomad Jukebox Zen
4. A mobo with RDRAM and AGP 8X
5. THPS4

For Gear news, reviews, previews, and more, visit:
<http://dvd.ign.com>.

MIKE WILEY

EDITOR LETTER ::

10.06.02 - How often do you really get to take a look at an entirely new format? That's a rhetorical question, but if you answered it you should have said Not very often at all, Mike. Most hardware gets by on innovation - small tweaks and improvements. This month, however, we take a close look at a wholly new medium: DataPlay.

I figure that most of you won't believe me until you actually turn the page and start reading the review. It seemed as if these small discs would never see the light of day. Happily, the good folks at iRiver America bring us the first ever DataPlay portable. How is it? You'll have to read and see.

If you've been keeping up with Gear, which I know you have been, you might have noticed that the big announcements have been rolling in like thunder. The holiday season is upon us, gentle consumers. Take that as a reminder that the reviews will be piling up on the site. Because you probably have no idea what to ask for, right?

**PHOTO OF THE MONTH ::**

So you think you know your gear? Well, see if you can identify this upcoming product. Don't bother trying to enlarge the image, as I rubber-stamped out the logo and brand name. It's a center channel speaker and it has THX certification, but that's all the help you get. Have at it!

**WHAT THE EDITORS ARE TOYING WITH ::
NOMAD JUKEBOX ZEN**

I put the Nomad Jukebox Zen on my Most Wanted list. Maybe that was a little unfair, though. Today I got an early press sample of Creative's new digital audio jukebox. As I write this article, the Zen hasn't been released, hence the inclusion on the list. I haven't had too much time to spend with the Zen, but it looks like it will become an important member of the Nomad family. Released pretty much in direct response to the iPod, the Zen takes many of the features of its big brother, the Nomad Jukebox 3, and seals them in a very compact enclosure. The result is a highly compact, full-featured player. It might not be as sexy as the iPod, but what it lacks in looks it makes up for with power and function. The Zen will retail for a very reasonable \$299.00 with a 20GB hard drive. Look out for a full review on IGN Gear.





iRIVER IDP-100 REVIEW

How many of you thought DataPlay would turn out to be vaporware? I certainly did. I first reported on this new portable storage format two years ago this month. A few months after the initial story I awarded the tiny discs Best of Show at CES. Keep in mind that that was CES 2001. After a release date that got shuffled around more than casino cards, I was doubtful that DataPlay would ever end up a viable solution. Besides that, certain specs were annoyingly mysterious. Would they be rewritable? How fast? Double-sided? The one element that's stayed constant is the price. At the time of the announcement, the \$5.00 and \$10.00 prices for 250MB and 500MB cards, respectively, were extraordinarily cheap. Those are still solid prices, but at the time a 64MB CompactFlash card cost about \$100.00.

Another hardship for DataPlay was that it would be entering an already crowded market. Portable storage was, and is, available in way too many flavors: CompactFlash, SmartMedia, MultiMediaCard, SD, and

Memory Stick. Did anyone want another format to consider? The difference, of course, is that the aforementioned formats are flash-based, while DataPlay discs are actual discs. They're simply greatly miniaturized. Storage takes place on small, spinning discs – one on each side for the 500MB units – inside of a thin plastic shell.

Despite all this DataPlay made it. Ironically, the first company to provide hardware for the new format is iRiver (<http://www.iriver.com>). I say "ironically" not because of iRiver's history, but rather because initially a whole slew of companies were on board to make hardware and iRiver wasn't one of them. When DataPlay was shown at CES 2001, everyone and their cousin had a player in the works. It turns out that that was just show talk.

I was glad to hear that iRiver was the first to market with a DataPlay device. The company runs their game stealth-style. You don't see any commercials or ads to

speak of, and mainstream consumers don't know who they are, but they sit back and release one good product after another. Their SlimX is still my top MP3 CD player, despite that fact that it's been out for almost a year and that several newer models have come out from other companies. It seems fitting in a way that iRiver would beat the competition to the punch.

The portable is called the iRiver iDP-100 and is currently available for \$350.00. Granted, that's a pretty penny to part with for a digital audio player, but you must bear in mind that early adoption is never for the budget-minded. If you fancy yourself an early adopter, then the iDP-100 deserves serious consideration. Not only is it the first such product, but also a damn fine portable, especially for a first-generation device. There are several improvements I can see being made as the product evolves, but it's a solid first step.

Before I get to player specifics, there are a couple things you should know about the format. Most importantly, DataPlay is a write-once, multi-session medium. The discs **cannot** be rewritten. Once you put something on the disc, it's there to stay. You can, however, add material to the disc so long as there's space. Secondly, the discs are two-sided. As I mentioned earlier, the discs are available in 250MB and 500MB sizes. The prices vary depending on where and when you buy them, but in general 500MB discs are about \$10.00 apiece when bought in multi-packs. And, like CDs and cassettes, the only reasonable way to buy them is in bulk.

Now that you know what you need to know about DataPlay – that's really it in a nutshell – I can move on to the player itself. iRiver has always taken their own path in terms of design. The iDP-100, however, really takes them into uncharted territory. No matter what you think of the aesthetic, you have to admit that it's distinct. There's no way you could confuse this odd little player with anything else on the market. If there's anything it resembles it's a silver G4 desktop. The center section is somewhat chubby and encased in a clear plastic shell that pinches together at the four corners. If you place the player on end it does look a bit like a G4.

The iDP-100 is also a good deal thicker than most portables. The main reason for the size is that the unit has to house a complete disc read/write mechanism. Most portables only have to accept flash memory, which requires a very compact interface. Luckily, the height and width are about average, so the overall volume is manageable. iRiver bundles a transparent carrying case with a belt clip. While the case protects the unit to some degree, its main purpose is to make the player portable. You could carry it in a pocket without the case, but it would have to be a big pocket. Following the tradition iRiver set for itself, the controls are laid out in a very intuitive fashion. The face of the player has four controls: EQ/Stand By, Play/Pause/Eject, Previous Track/Reverse Scan, and Next Track/Forward Scan. The buttons are set close to

each corner, which accents the nice symmetrical design of the player.

The remaining controls are set on the right side of the body. Toward the lower section are separate Volume Up and Volume Down buttons. Toward the top is a multi-function jog dial. The dial doesn't rotate fully, but rather moves a slight bit in each direction. It can also be depressed in order to make a selection. During playback the dial cycles through play modes when moved in either direction. All told, there are nine play modes:

- Repeat track
- Repeat entire directory
- Play current directory and then stop
- Play contents of entire disc
- Shuffle contents of entire disc
- Shuffle current directory and then stop
- Shuffle current directory repeatedly
- Play first ten seconds of each track
- A-B repeat. (You select the A and B points for the loop.)

During playback the jog dial simply moves up and down through the track list.

In order to activate the menu system you simply hold in the jog dial for more than one second. Despite its prodigious size and exacting options, the menu system is extremely easy to navigate. This is another trademark of iRiver. They seem to use the same menu system and simply, and wisely, transplant it from player to player. If it can't be improved then don't try. Read the menu listing with caution, as you might get jealous if you own a more anemic portable.





General Options:

- Beep Volume: 0, 1, 2, 3
- Resume: on or off
- Fade In: on or off
- Language: Afrikaans, Albanian, Basque, Byelorussian, Bulgarian, Catalan, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Faeroese, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian, Icelandic, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Latvian, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish, Ukrainian, and Other (!)
- Load Default
- Firmware Upgrade

Display Options:

- Backlight: off, button on, adapter button on
- LCD Contrast:
- Remote LCD Contrast
- Visualization: progressive or level meter
- Tag Information: on or off
- Time: elapsed or remaining

Timer:

- Sleep: off or on (one minute intervals from one to 60 minutes)
- Power Off (in pause): off or on (one minute intervals from one to 60 minutes)

Control:

- Fast Scan: on or off
- Fast Skip: off, ten tracks, directory
- Scroll Speed: 1X, 2X, or 3X and vertical or horizontal
- Auto Pause: on or off
- Adapter Volume
- Sound Balance: left/right balance

Mode:

- Repeat: one track, directory, directory all, and whole disc
- Shuffle: one track, directory, directory all, and whole disc
- Intro: on or off
- Power: normal, power save, super power save

User EQ:

- Bass Boost
- Bass Corner Frequency: set area of bass to be adjusted
- Treble Boost
- Treble Corner Frequency: set area of treble to be adjusted

(How many portables allow you to set the width of the frequencies affected by bass and treble boost?)

Of course, all of this would be for naught if the iDP-100 didn't sound good. Luckily, it sounds terrific. iRiver installed quite a powerful headphone amplifier in the player. I have a hard time thinking of an environment in which you couldn't get enough volume out of the iDP-100. Sound remains clear and free of distortion throughout the volume range. In order to take full advantage you'll have to invest in a decent set of earbuds. The bundled Sennheisers are nice for freebies, but you'd do much better to pick up a serious pair.

Another element of the player lifted from previous iRiver portables is the outstanding LCD. The blue backlight provides plenty of light and the text is razor sharp. The screen also displays plenty of information: play time, playback mode, hold, battery life, folder name, artist name, volume/EQ meter, bitrate, sample rate, and file format.

The iDP-100 pulls power from an internal rechargeable battery. The unit ships with an AC adapter. You can use the player while it's charging; it will simply take longer to charge.

iRiver decided on a USB 1.1 interface for the iDP-100. I understand that most people are still using this aging interface, but with capacities this large a high-speed connection would have been a wiser choice. Cueing up 200MB of music is fine, but sitting around waiting for it to write isn't so fun.

Speaking about transfers, song files are slightly altered for playback in the iDP-100. The extensions are changed to .ckmp3 from .mp3. This is done for security's sake so that you can't share songs between computers.

Conclusion

So is DataPlay right for you? Detractors will tell you that blank CDs are a fraction of the price and hold more data. The advantage over CD is physical size. An MP3 CD player might be thin, but it's still necessarily large. Move down to an 8cm CD player and you slice your capacity to shreds. Flash-based players, of course, are nowhere close to this capacity. Then you have hard drive players. I think this is the main competition for DataPlay. For the same price as the iDP-100 you can get an iPod or Nomad Zen.

However, the idea of permanently storing several albums on separate discs and then simply taking whatever you want with you will appeal to many people. You could buy a number of discs and have them recorded by genre, for example.

And then there's the fact that it's simply a cool new technology, which will no doubt grab the attention of technophiles.

I was very impressed by the iDP-100. I think if anyone had the skills to pull off a first-generation model it's iRiver. And while they *did* pull it off, you might want to wait and see where the format goes before making such an investment.

The iDP-100 is another great product from iRiver, but the format forces me to recommend it with some reservation. ■ — Mike Wiley



fan art ::

Here at IGN, we receive loads of fan art each month. The art varies from crappy drawings of Matt on his knees investigating a broken zipper of Peer's, to beautifully rendered artwork of Lara Croft naked. While we can't really show either of those files to you, we *can* show you some of the other great work sent in by readers. If you would like to submit your own artwork, head over to <http://insider.ign.com/articles/371/371587p1.html>. (we're working on a better URL)



Final Fantasy X
Daniel Veessenmeyer



Pikachu
Adam Brewer



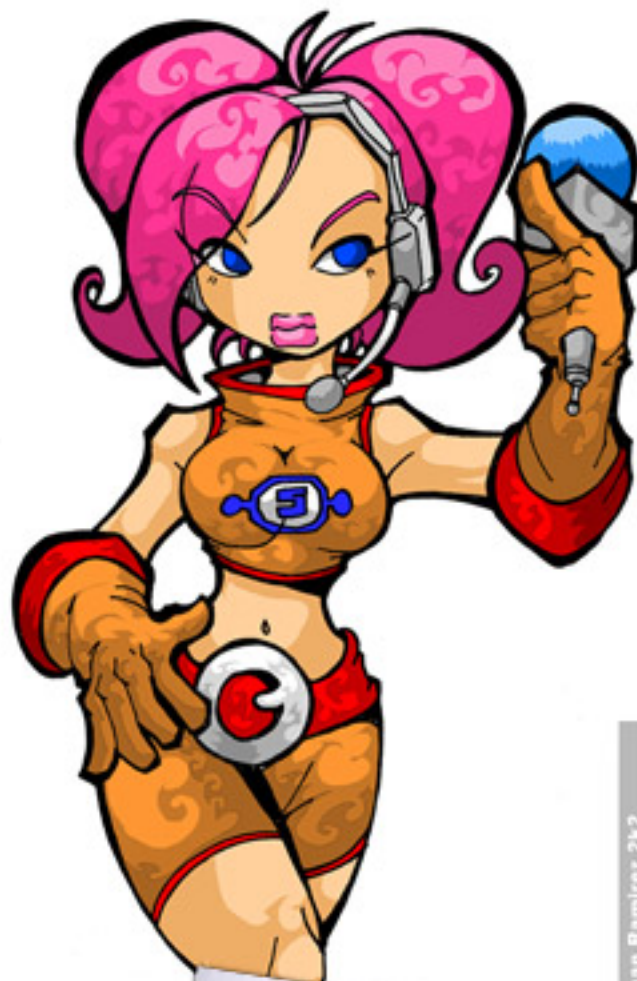
Dino Crisis
Ken Smith



Zelda
Paul M.



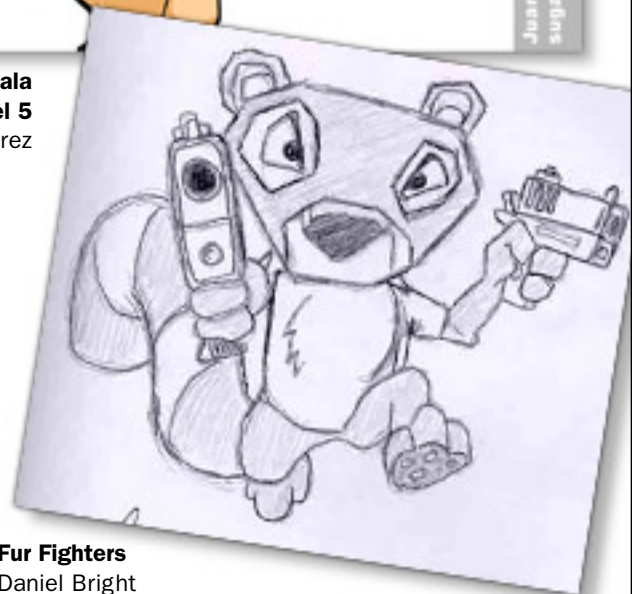
Sub-Zero
Robbie Reilly



Juan Ramirez 2k2
sugardog@evilemail.com

Ulala
Space Channel 5
Juan Ramirez

IGN
Kyle Brinkman



Fur Fighters
Daniel Bright



parting shot ::

Sometimes a picture needs neither a caption or explanation. It's simply there to be enjoyed and shared.

See you next month...roughly.

